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SEP 1 1 1935

# CORNHILL MAGAZINE

EDITED BY  
LORD GORELL

SEPTEMBER  
1935

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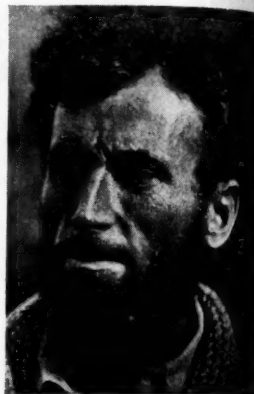
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## BOOK NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

### *A Record of Heroism*

IN the annals of man's many endeavours to conquer nature there is many a record of superlative heroism, chief of which is, undoubtedly, that of the gallant struggle of Captain Scott to reach the South Pole. Almost on a level with that tragic epic is the effort of the German Expedition which last year set out to conquer Nanga Parbat, the highest peak of the Western Himalaya. Within about 2,000 feet of the summit, everything indicated success. And then the weather changed, and for two days the party waited for the storms to abate and give them a chance to gain the summit. But there was no cessation of the violent weather and the expedition was forced to descend. The story of the descent is most moving in its tragic events, but over all lies the unquarable courage and endurance of human nature that makes *Nanga Parbat Adventure*, by Herr Fritz Bechtold, a book almost unequalled in its portrayal of the finest human virtues.



FRITZ BECHTOLD.

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### *A Controversial Book*

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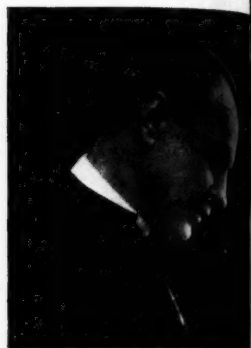
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## BOOK NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

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**W**E SAY 'NO', is a work written by the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard to express his personal beliefs regarding the Christian answer to militarism and the physical philosophy of violence and to explain his Peace Pledge which has been signed by many thousands of men. The problem of peace and war and the modern attempt to find an answer to it by means of collective security, are discussed from the Christian standpoint, and Dr. Sheppard examines all the major arguments on the other side and states the case for Pacifism as the only hope for civilisation.



REV. H. R. L. SHEPPARD.

### *By the author of 'The Spanish Farm Trilogy'*

**M**R. R. H. MOTTRAM'S new novel, *Flower Pot End*, is a perfect example of the subtle portrayal of human connection of which he is the master. Over the tale lies the quiet haze of a summer afternoon and, apparently, the placidity of a backwater of life, and yet this is really not so, for there is a deep universality in Mr. Mottram's art with its rich sense of character and significant interplay of events and people. This simple story of the Norfolk rectory and the people whose lives are lived under its influence and acquaintance is most moving in its verisimilitude.

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# THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER 1935.

LOPE DE VEGA.

A GHOST STORY.

By WALTER STARKIE.

RECENTLY when I was wandering about Andalusia, living the life of a footsore minstrel, I verified the truth of the adage which says: 'If you have no honey in your jar it is as well to have it on your lips.' A tune on the fiddle will always get you a crust of bread and a swig at a wine jar, but it is not so efficacious as a story. In this year of grace 1935, I must confess to the shade of the great Lope Felix de Vega Carpio—Phoenix of all geniuses—that I, a raggle-taggle minstrel, used his august name to earn myself a resting-place in a barn and a meagre meal. This year the Spaniards have been celebrating with pomp and pageantry the tercentenary of the man who created the theatre of Spain's golden age. There have been performances of his plays in the classical playhouse in Madrid; learned professors have given lectures to explain the amazing phenomenon of a human being who, according to his own more modest estimate, wrote over 1,500 plays; spicy chroniclers have revelled in telling the world of the love life of one who was the living personification of the traditional Don Juan Tenorio.

My celebration of Lope de Vega was more in accordance with the profession of a humble *juglar*. To my audience I told a ghost story of Lope de Vega.

It was in a small tavern in the town of Loja on the way to Granada. I had arrived at nightfall, dusty, sweaty and bedraggled. Not a *sou* had I in my pockets, and my feet were so sore that the corns on my toes seemed to have communicated their blighting influence to my fingers. The owner of the tavern was a pale, dyspeptic creature without a trace of the jollity that we associate with Andalusian landlords. There were a dozen men sitting in mournful conclave against the white-washed walls with glasses of wine on the table in front of them. I tried to coax a few tunes out of the fiddle—a fandango, a bolero and a vito, but they did not work any magic spell. 'Had I been in Seville I should have had more luck,' thought I: 'here they are as solemn as the Castilians at Pancorbo.'

Then all of a sudden a bright idea came into my mind. Why not



tell them a ghost story ? This is the method of the prudent 'juglar.' He never forgets to cast a watchful, gypsy eye at his audience. If he cannot reach them by music, he tries anecdote, for his duty in life is to be an entertainer. And so with various appeals for attention I began my story as follows :

When a wanderer sets out on his journey he must take the rough with the smooth and he must be prepared to suffer the ache of loneliness, aye, and he must have lost his father, mother, children, friends or never have had them, to wander at ease over the habitable globe. Wherever he goes he must face the black looks of those who despise the stranger. Is it any wonder if he suffers at times from terrors and delusions so that men think he has the windmills of La Mancha in his head ?

One day some years ago I set out from Zaragoza on foot to walk to Calatayud—a long, weary journey through deserted country. After many hours of tramping in the bypaths I determined to halt in one of the small towns. When I asked for a shelter nobody would give it to me, for they distrusted me. My shoes were worn out, my feet were bleeding, my hair was tousled and my face scorched by the sun. Everyone shut the door in my face, and so I wended my way to the last refuge of the poor man—the Asylum. It was night time when I arrived, but to my surprise not a light did I see in the building. Neighbours told me then that nobody would stay there because strange noises had been heard at night. 'The house is haunted,' said they, 'ever since the stranger died there some time ago.'

One pulled me aside and told me to go into the building and straight to the chapel where a holy man was praying. 'He will tell you where you may sleep without danger.'

I passed through the door into a long, dark passage and groped my way with my stick towards a tiny, flickering light in the distance, calling out the name of the holy man.

'What do you want with me, evil spirit ?' said he.

'I am no evil spirit,' said I ; 'open to me, friend—I am a traveller seeking a shelter for the night.'

The door was then opened and I saw a very strange old man. He was of medium height, middle-aged, with long hair and a thick, matted beard. He was dressed in a rough habit which reached to his feet. The chapel was small and the old man slept on the marble step before the altar. His pillow was a big stone and by his side



lay a staff and a skull to remind him of the vanity of human life.

The hermit then addressed me :

'You must be courageous to come in here ? Has no one told you that this house is haunted ?'

'Yes, they told me,' said I, 'but I have had so many hard knocks and been in so many tight corners that nothing will startle me.'

The old man then lit a candle from a lamp that hung before one of the statues and told me to follow him.

We passed through a garden so overgrown with rank weeds that it resembled a jungle—then between a row of cypress trees until we reached a building. The hermit unlocked the door giving access to a vast room and said :

'There is your room : you are a strong man and toughened by the world. Make the sign of the Cross and go to sleep in peace.' He then closed the door and shuffled away.

There was a bed in the room of sorts, but it was a luxury for me, for I had slept many nights on the ground. I took off my clothes and slipped on one of the two nightshirts which my dear wife put into my knapsack when I left home.

I had hardly time to review over in my mind the events of the day when sleep covered me up with a thick cloak as she does all tired travellers.

How long I slept I do not know, but I awoke all of a sudden hearing the sound of horses galloping in the distance. At first I imagined that I was still walking, for the bed seemed to move like a ship or horse, a phenomenon that always happens to those who have tramped overmuch during the day. But then I remembered that I was in the Asylum, and as I had been warned that the place was haunted I opened my eyes. To my amazement I saw some men enter the room on horseback with long tubes in their hands. They rode over to the candle which I had left lighted and lit the tubes from its flame. Then they threw them up to the roof of the room, where they stuck and shed flames over my bed and my clothes.

I covered myself up as best I could in the bedclothes, keeping all the while a watchful look-out. The flames suddenly went out. The men then sat down at a table and began to gamble with cards. They dealt and shuffled and staked money as if they were in deadly earnest. Soon a quarrel broke out among the gamblers, weapons

were drawn and so many blows were given that I began to pray to Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose sanctuary is the only one I have not yet visited.

However, the quarrel ceased soon and all the noise died down for half an hour, but I assure you my whole body was bathed in sweat. Just when I thought that the men had disappeared, I suddenly felt someone tugging at the extremities of the blankets and sheets and pulling them gradually away from me. Now I was really frightened, for without the bedclothes I was defenceless in my nudity. I saw a fierce-looking man with a torch in his hand followed by two others, one of whom carried a big metal basin, while the other was sharpening a carving knife. My hair stood up on end; I tried to speak but could not. As soon as they had come up to me, the man with the torch blew it out. 'I'm lost,' said I to myself; 'they will cut my head off and that basin is to catch my blood.' I stretched out my hands in the dark to ward off the knife: they were gripped. I shouted. At once the torch was lit again and I saw that two big dogs had seized hold of my hands.

In desperation I called out—'Jesus Christ.' At that name the ghosts retired beneath the bed and the light was quenched. They settled the bedclothes as they had been originally, but they raised my head and propped it up on fresh pillows and smoothed out the sheets and blankets.

For a while I was left in peace and I began to recite to myself some lines from the psalm of David which I remembered. This gave me some confidence and I thought they would now leave me alone. But then to my horror I perceived that the ghosts beneath my bed were gradually lifting it on their backs and hoisting it up to the roof. I was sick with terror, expecting any second to fall to the ground. Then a big hand from a rafter caught a hold of me by the arm. The bed fell to the ground with a frightful crash and I found myself dangling in mid-air from that gigantic hand. Around the room a great number of windows suddenly opened and many men and women gazed at me, laughing shrilly and kept squirting water at me from syringes.

Just then the bed caught fire and the flames dried the moisture on my body, but I was more afraid of them than I had been of the water. The fire soon went out and the arm lowered me into my bed and settled the bedclothes over me.

For about an hour I was left in peace, then I saw the ghosts

ferreting in my knapsack where I kept my worldly belongings, and they scattered them all round the room.

Without a moment's hesitation I jumped up to rescue them, for though I had been terrified at first my blood was now up.

The ghosts flitted out of the room into the garden and I rushed after them. I saw them pass between the cypress trees and on to a well, where they threw my belongings and disappeared after them.

I did not pursue them any farther, so I turned back to the hermit's chapel. He opened the door and, seeing me pale and distracted, he said :

'The ghosts have given you a bad night.'

'So bad,' said I, 'that I have not slept a wink. I'll leave my ragged cloak as payment for the night's rest I have not had.'

The hermit then took me into his resting-place and while we waited for dawn to appear he told me stories of others who had spent the night in the haunted room.

The ghost story worked like a magic spell upon my tavern audience. A commercial traveller was the first to toast me in *cañas* of Manzanilla. As a result of the story I was fed with a good dish of *cocido* and later on a muleteer in my audience accommodated me with some straw in the corner of the stable. Only after I had satisfied my hunger and drunk my three times three did I disclose the true author of the ghost story. It was as if a shrill blast of winter had chilled the assembly.

'We thought it was all an adventure that had happened to you,' said the commercial traveller.

'We ought to have known as much,' said the saddle-maker; 'there are no ghosts in Spain.'

'You are wrong, *tío Juan*,' said the hunchback in the party, 'don't you remember the fuss in the papers about the clanking chains and rattling skeletons which the people heard in the empty house at Granada?'

In my straw couch in the stable before going to sleep I sang my hymn of gratitude to the great Lope de Vega.

# AYRSHIRE YESTERDAYS.

BY A. A. W. RAMSAY.

## I.

WHEN I was a child I used to be sent away from home to spend the winter months at the farm of Whitehouse, on the borders of Cunningham and Kyle. It was about a mile from the little town of Kilwinning, where Robert Baillie once was minister, the very heart of the countryside we know from *Annals of the Parish*. At the time I first knew it this countryside presented a wonderful picture of balanced prosperity, for industry and agriculture flourished side by side, intermingled in a way that I think is characteristic of Scotland—at least I have not seen the like elsewhere.

It was a land of long undulating slopes, running up into low summits on either side of the wide shallow vale, down which slid unobtrusively the Garnock water, to end in shining flats and scattered sandhills. All about the sandhills stood groups of tall smokestacks, each with its plume of dark smoke. The town was a centre of factories, mines and iron-foundries. At noon you heard their whistles blowing far up into the hills; at night the furnaces flared like the gates of hell, gasping and suspiring. There were chemical factories where they made potash and ammonia and T.N.T., with strangely shaped cones and funnels and vats. This was in the good old days, before the War, when economic laws still did what the University professors told them to, and the financial system had not kicked over the traces: unemployment was only an occasional nuisance, and generally the factories were all working full pressure. There were not a few families in the town, families that had grown-up sons and daughters, where £20 a week in wages came in regularly.

Sometimes the T.N.T. blew up, and the windows in the little town, three miles off, were all broken; but the girls turned up at their work at six sharp next morning, as cool and noisy as ever. These girls were searched every day as they went on their job, to make sure they had no metal on their bodies: no hair-pins, no buttons, no brooches or pins, not so much as tackets on their shoe-laces or hooks to their stays, were allowed. . . . Sometimes

too the workmen fell into the boiling vats and were hauled out and died, sooner or unfortunately later. Once one of the foundrymen got a splinter of iron, an eighth of an inch thick, lodged in the ball of his eye. He clapped his hand over it, walked out of the works and down to the railway station, got into the first train to Glasgow, and went straight to the Infirmary there. They told him his coolness had saved his eye.

Outside the circle of factories, the rich agricultural land closed in. It was cultivated to the last acre. On the noble fields of oats and wheat and barley you never saw a weed—never corn-flower or scarlet poppy or yellow charlock, only rarely there was a sprinkling of corn-marigolds along the edges. The hedges were all close trimmed and there were no wild-flowers—except the roses, which seemed to flourish all the more for their strict pruning. Late June was the time to see it, when the hawthorns were loaded with blossom, and the roses beginning to open, and the whole countryside gleamed and glowed with fields of coloured grasses, dark purple and rosy, crawling with a burnished sheen under the wind.

All about the fields the little farms were dotted—solid, comfortable stone houses, with grey tile roofs and white-washed walls. You could see them for miles and miles, especially when the westering sun kindled all their window-panes as if candles burned behind them. Each had its wind-screen of beeches, their tops sheared off in one long lovely curve by the salty winds from Clyde. Every little knowe, too, had its grove of beeches girdled by a stone wall. I used to fancy they were like the 'groves upon hill-tops,' that I read of in the Bible.

No Scottish industrial town is far from the hills. From Kilwinning itself you could see the sea, and the far-flung jagged line of the peaks of Arran, and the Ailsa, floating like a flower in the mists of the west.

## II.

These farms were mostly small ones. At Whitehouse, for example, the work was done by four persons—or rather, three and three-quarters—with the help of a couple of extra hands at harvest. The farmer himself—referred to as The Maister, but always addressed, even by my ten-year-old self, as Hugh—was a gaunt, easy-going man of forty or thereabouts, with a rather exaggeratedly genial manner and an untidy reddish beard. He was a bachelor.

For a period of years he carried on a courtship of a lady, improbably known as Miss Herring : after about five years' acquaintance matters were so far advanced that he invited her to tea at Whitehouse. She came : presumably she disliked the look of her future home ; at least the wooing was broken off for good.

The Mistress, accordingly, remained the farmer's sister. There was a considerable difference of age between them, for she had been the eldest of a large family of which he was almost the youngest. She had been crippled in her youth by the kick of a vicious cow which she was milking, and could only walk with the aid of a stick, as her feet were turned inward, indeed almost backwards. Except for this she was a very handsome old lady, with clear light blue eyes, a fair fresh rosy face, almost unlined, and smooth golden hair, only beginning to be streaked with white, which was parted in the centre, combed back, and rolled into a knot behind. She was the directing spirit of the place, keeping all going smoothly and in order. There was another brother resident at Whitehouse, Alec, but he was employed in a bank in Glasgow, and played no part in the life of the place except to lend a hand with the milking when he came home at night.

Then there was The Lass, who usually changed from year to year—a succession of strapping good-natured young women they were, not unpicturesque in their working dress, when they wore their hair in a long plait, a dark tight-fitting sleeveless bodice, and an apron of thick blue cloth with coloured stripes, over which a second apron of sacking was tied for the roughest work. One of these girls had the most beautiful red-gold hair I have ever seen, long enough to come down almost to her knees, and she used to wash it on Saturday nights and sit drying it in front of the kitchen fire, greatly to the annoyance of the Mistress, for Aggie looked like a fairy princess with the firelight glinting on her hair, and Hugh and Alec could do nothing but stare at her.

The remaining member of the household was The Orra Man. Archie—I never heard his surname—was the feeble-minded son of a good family, who had been advised by the doctors to send him to work on a farm. I think they were ashamed of him, as they never came to see him or showed the slightest interest in his fate. He was quite incapable of doing responsible work, like the ploughing or the milking, but he performed routine menial work steadily enough, and was perfectly harmless. About once a week the Mistress gave him sixpence and let him go down to the village



in the evening. He usually spent his sixpence on tobacco, and never got into mischief. His greatest treat, however, was to be called in to sing when there were visitors in the house. His repertoire consisted of three songs, 'The Man That Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo,' 'Where Did You Get That Hat?' and 'The Star o' Rabbie Burns.' The last he sang with tremendous feeling and enthusiasm, but his audience always preferred the comic songs, which he really delivered exceedingly well. He had no voice to speak of—he could keep on the tune, but was hoarse and sometimes went flat; but he had evidently been well trained in the delivery (by whom nobody knew) and had a real appreciation of the humour. It was not at all a bad performance, and the best part of the entertainment was his intense pride and pleasure. Everyone was always very kind to him and overwhelmed him with thanks and praises.

He was a shambling, awkward creature, whose hair was already growing grey, and often had straws sticking in it. I always connected him with the Mad Gardener of Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno*, for he was exactly like Harry Furniss's illustrations. Children are callous little devils, and it was a great amusement with myself and little Jim, the Mistress's nephew, to say to him, 'Hey, Erchie, are ye daft?' to which Archie would reply, 'Daft! Hey! Daft!' and point to his head, and laugh loud and long; but with the helpless fear and pain of his wild eyes strangely belying the laughter.

### III.

The farms were devoted to dairy work and cultivation. You never saw sheep in that district then, though they are common now. At Whitehouse there were generally about twenty milk cows, and as many young beasts of various ages coming on. The events of the day were the foddering and the milking of the beasts. The milk cows lived in a long byre, communicating at one end with the barn and at the other with the boiler-house. At eleven o'clock we all got busy—for I always wanted to help and was never better pleased than when allowed, for a treat, to muck out the byre with a hoe. Archie was already in the barn, putting turnips and hay through the chopper, and the Lass and I carried one bucket after another up to the boiler-house. There the Mistress was mixing the 'kye's meat.' The furnace was lighted under the cistern, and she ladled out buckets of boiling water and emptied them into an

old iron bath, all the paint worn off it, on the top of the mashed turnips and hay, and then added more pailfuls of meal. Clouds of steam filled the boiler-house and eddied here and there, and the gnarled and twisted form of the Mistress, dimly seen as she bent over the tub, looked like some old witch brewing a devil's broth. She lifted the stuff out in armfuls and splashed it into the empty buckets and the Lass and I snatched them up steaming and raced with them into the byre. This part of the job kept us breathless, for once one cow had had her portion the rest became restless until they were served. I used to be almost frightened when pushing my way in between two greedy shouldering beasts, to empty my pail into the trough; for once they pushed up so close before I could get out again that I was caught between the two vast warm shuddering flanks and half-suffocated before I managed to fight my way out, kicking them and pummelling them with my fists, to which they remained totally indifferent.

But the milking was the best, especially on the winter nights, when it was quite dark at six o'clock, and the byre was lit only by the two tall lamps, swinging on wire handles, so that you could set them down without stooping. A wonderful brooding peace descended on the crowded byre. The cows munched and sighed contentedly, and there was no other sound but the gentle musical noise of the milk squirting into the pails, softly rising and falling. The milkers sat silently at their work, their heads butted deep into the warm sides of the beasts, their hands ceaselessly pulling at the taut udders, their faces dreamily fixed and contented like the cows. . . . The whole place smelt warm and sweet with milk. Every now and then one of the workers would rise and carry a full pail across the dark yard to the dairy, and pour it into the pans there, thick and bubbling—like what they sell in the towns as the best cream.

The spring ploughing, too, was a good time. I rode to the plough on Princie's back, feeling his huge shoulder-blades slide rhythmically between my knees, somehow excited by the heat of his great body striking upwards from under the satiny skin. When we reached the field I got down, to follow the plough up and down between the furrows, while all the time scores of larks sang their hearts out, lost in the blue. Every now and then Princie or Charlie would stop and fidget mincingly with his feet. Hugh would stop too, look ahead, and find the lapwing's nest which the wise beasts had tried to avoid treading on. He lifted the four speckled eggs



carefully into the next furrow, and shook his fist at the cloud of rooks and black-headed gulls following him, to warn them off. For the lapwing, which eats the leather-jacket, is the farmer's darling. The only time I ever got into trouble with Hugh was when I stole a lapwing's egg to add to my brother's collection.

Some time in November or December came the exciting day of the Big Mill. This was the local name for the threshing machine, which at this season travelled round from farm to farm. The whole population of the district turned out to help with the threshing. All the men from Castlehill, Upper Whitehouse, High Smithston, and the rest would crowd into our stack-yard, and next week Hugh went to lend them a hand in return. I was always rather frightened of the Big Mill, and only hovered at a safe distance while it clanked and steamed with its racing black belts, champing up the forkfuls of corn the sweating men flung to it, and disgorging them in a steady rain of grain at the other end. I ran away in to help the Mistress cut slice after slice of inch-thick bread and spread them liberally with butter and jam for the hungry workers.

Every Sunday 'the buggy' was brought out, the docile Princie was insinuated between its inadequate shafts, and we drove in state down to church.

#### IV.

After I had left Whitehouse Archie got into trouble. For some time the Mistress had suspected that something odd was happening to the eggs. The hens had no settled abode, but laid here and there all over the barn, the byres, and the stack-yard; but one could count on a regular and plentiful supply, and this had been steadily falling off. The Mistress began to find eggs put to cook in the 'kye's meat'—a minute or two in that seething mess did them to a turn—and that clearly pointed to Archie. Finally Mary, the new Lass, actually saw him put one in. . . .

They called him up and scolded him. He flatly denied his guilt. They grew angry, but they could not shake him. With a face of the most convincing innocence, he swore he had never taken an egg, never put one to cook. They did not know how to deal with him unless they could extort a confession. Robin, the third brother, came over from Castlehill, and together he and Hugh tackled him. They said they would duck him in the horse-pond if he did not confess. They did not, of course, really mean to do this; and in any case the horse-pond was only about a foot deep;

but Archie did not know either of these facts. The poor fellow got quite white. 'You may kill me,' he said, 'but I did not do it.'

A few days later Hugh caught the douce Mary handing over a basket of eggs, carefully camouflaged, to her little sister. The little sister used to come every Saturday, but hitherto no one had guessed that she carried away several dozen eggs at every visit, to be sold in the town.

It distressed the Mistress terribly that she never could be sure that Archie understood her explanations and her regrets. He only looked at her vaguely, and his wild eyes always held the same nameless distress. She tried to be very kind to him, she gave him extra sixpences, sometimes even a shilling; but she never could be quite sure he understood.

Not long after one of his sisters, who had married a clergyman, moved to a house in the country, and sent for Archie, saying he could live with her and work in her garden. So he left Whitehouse.

## V.

When I returned to Kilwinning some fifteen years later, a friend pointed out to me a small boy at the other side of the street. 'Do you remember Betsy Paterson?' she said. 'That's hers. She's got three others—all by different fathers.'

I remembered Betsy Paterson. Her family had been our nearest neighbours at Whitehouse, and a feud raged between them. One of our 'parks,' as they call fields in Ayrshire, was at the far side of the high-road, adjoining Paterson's farm instead of its own. Betsy Paterson's white calf continually trespassed there. Our kitchen window overlooked this park, and a half-dozen times a day the Mistress would rise from her seat, hobble to the door, and yell, 'Hugh! Hugh! there's yon cauf o' Paiterson's in the park!' and Hugh would swear, grasp a stick, and rush out. Betsy herself was a tall healthy girl of fifteen, passionately fond of animals. Besides the calf she had a magnificent collie which followed her everywhere. I can see her still, with a scarlet tam-o'-shanter on her black curls, her eyes like stars and her lips and cheeks like cherries, laughing and beating off the great dog as it leaped and leaped to lick her face.

Betsy's offspring had not inherited her good looks. He was a stunted child, who was twelve years old but looked eight. His face was sunburned and freckled almost black, his hair bleached by the sun till you could not tell its original colour. He had the

blank patient face and hoarse toneless voice common in slum children. Andra lived with his grandmother—Betsy had naturally gravitated towards Glasgow and had taken the younger children with her—in one room of a slummy house in the slummiest street of Kilwinning. He was deeply attached to his grandmother, and she to him. They had no visible means of support but contrived to exist without anybody bothering over them. Andra, in spite of his unattractive appearance, was liked by everyone. The friend who had introduced me to him often contrived to invent errands for him to run, to have an excuse to tip him tuppence. He was absolutely reliable as a messenger, and always brought back the correct change if sent to a shop. Out of these small earnings he had contrived to buy himself a complete boy scout's kit, and was the keenest member of his troop. He knew every yard of the country for miles around and every flower to be found in it. He was always hanging round the farmyards waiting for a chance of lending a hand. When you asked him 'What are you going to be when you're grown-up?' he answered with conviction, 'I'm to be a farmer.'

About a year after this Andra's grandmother died. During her last illness she was much troubled by the thought that the boy must now go to his mother in Glasgow. For hours she lay, picking at the bed-clothes, and muttering without end, 'Andra : Andra : Andra. . . .' Then she died, and Andra went off to a Glasgow tenement, for there was no one whose business it was to interfere. He came to say good-bye, and said, 'I'm coming back to Kilwinning,' but no one believed this, for it seemed obvious that the Gorbals would swallow Andra, and no one would hear of him more.

Next summer, however, he turned up one day, looking smaller and blacker than ever.

'Why, Andra!' said his friend, 'how did you get here?'

'I cam doon by the nine-forty-five,' said Andra, 'in the van. I ken the gaurd.'

'And how will you get back?'

'I'm gaun back by the five-fifteen; I ken the gaurd on that yin too,' said Andra.

'And do you like Glasgow?'

'Na; I like Kilwinnin' best. I'm comin' back to be a farmer.'

'What's the news of Andra?' I asked when I returned a year later. Oh, Andra was gone, I learned. He was off to Canada.

The Barnardo homes, or some such organisation, had got hold of him, and packed him off with a batch of other lads. They would be drafted into agricultural work, so Andra would realise his one wish, and be a farmer, which was one good thing. No doubt Canada will be glad to get him. Yet I cannot help feeling that the country which can find nothing better to do with Andra than to export him is a spendthrift one. . . .

## VI.

Not so long back Kilwinning had a life of its own, and there was plenty of give-and-take between the town and the country round. I have talked with men, not so old, who remembered when the school had three days' holiday every summer for 'The Papingay.' Then all the neighbouring gentry came in to the town, in green coats, with feathers in their bonnets, and shot a match with the bow in the yard of the old Abbey church. At the end a wooden pigeon, the Papingay, was fixed on a pole at the top of the Abbey tower, and he who shot it down was named Captain for the following year. Each Captain opened the proceedings by shooting an arrow 'at rovers' over the top of the tower, and there was a great rush among the boys to find and pick it up. On the second day the townspeople shot, and on the third the schoolboys. For weeks beforehand the Bowmaker with his men was working overtime, making bows and arrows. He was the local joiner.

The landlord was a gentleman of an ancient name, whose ancestors had held a position honourable in Scottish history for patriotism and integrity. He was liked and deeply respected by all the district: 'he's a real gentleman, the Earl,' said the farmers. Much of the life of the little town centred round the castle. What with the house-servants, and the gardens, and the stables, and the foxhound kennels, the estate employed some fifty men and women, and their custom made a perceptible difference to the little shops. The respectable townspeople took their regular Sunday walk in the noble woods about the castle, where they were free to wander as they liked, and peep into the windows of the tiny thatched cottage where a bygone daughter of the house played at cooking and sweeping, and stand before the obelisk, raised long ago by some dead earl in memory of his little grandson, the hope of his house, dead at seven years old, 'on the spot where he best loved to play.' During the War, the Earl kept the families of every man in his employment in their houses as long as the men were at the front,

and paid over to their wives the same wages that he had given when they were at home.

All this is gone now. The pleasant intercourse between town and country has ceased. The gentry look to London, and have better things to do than shooting with the bow. The old Earl died, and his successors took the roof off the castle and abandoned the place. Well, it was rumoured the death-duties came to over a million pounds, and crippled the estate for good. The only house in the grounds now inhabited is the gardener's cottage. Nettles and dockens are growing in the roofless banqueting-hall. The woods are sinking into neglect, and the black yew-trees above the obelisk seem to weep for more than little Hugh's untimely death.

And outside, the industrial civilisation to which the old land-owners were sacrificed is likewise sinking into ruin. Looking across the salty flats, you see the tall chimneys still, but scarcely one floats its trail of dusky smoke. The mines are all closed down—permanently. Every foundry but one is closed. The throngs of men who used to come pouring, with their grimy faces, down the village street when the whistles blew, now stand about the doors of the public-houses with their hands in their pockets, waiting till it is time to draw the dole. Where now is Rab Smith, who used to stand Labour candidate for Parliament and promise all those who voted for him £5 a week and a free house? On the dole too, I daresay. Only the munition factories, I believe, are still at work. . . .

And the farmers, looking at their fields tanned by the generous sun, with bitterness in their hearts, wonder why they still struggle on, and why they should sow and till the land to feed a nation that cares not whether its oldest industry lives or dies.

## SAID KHAN'S BURJ.

BY A. E. W. SALT.

I HAVE been told by an otherwise charming lady that there is nothing to write about in Peshawar. With all courtesy, I entirely disagree. Whether Peshawar be—as some say—the “Tom Tiddler’s Ground” of hereditary raiders to whom God has granted the Kingdom of Asia and its dependencies,’ or—as another has written—‘a patch of Central Asia plumped down in India, which, with Kabul only 190 miles away, is, historically and geographically, part of Afghanistan,’ or merely ‘nothing, not Afghan or Persian or Tartar, but only the East,’ there is enough in its story to make a full and fascinating book. To write such is not my *métier*. Reluctantly, I must drag myself away from the wondrous bazaar of ‘the coveted city,’ from the beauty and romance and order of its cantonment, from the dragon-teeth of its surrounding hills—grey-green at dawn, golden-brown in the midday heat, rose and roseate amber at sunset—even from the yawning breach in the wall of sandstone and shale, which men call the Khyber, through which—from time immemorial—the invaders of the north have come about their lawful and unlawful business. The tale I wish to tell is of one small building, known as Said Khan’s Burj, and its encompassing garden, because round that garden and its tower two of the most vital chapters in the history of Modern Peshawar—the story of the beginning of the Guides and the story of the Afghan Mission Hospital—have been indelibly written.

The garden lies on the west side of the city wall on which it abuts. The tower is octagonal in shape and is surmounted by a dome and rests on a lofty terrace—approached by a flight of steps leading to each of its four entrances at the four points of the compass. There is no record as to the year of its building or as to who was its builder, but it bears the customary marks of Mogul architecture of the reign of Shah Jehan. Tradition has it that it was originally the resting-place of a ‘*dera*’ or wandering saint (cf. *Dera* Ismail Khan, *Dera* Ghazi Khan)—that, later, it became a house of feasting and merriment, then a tomb, and, finally, the abode



of Said Khan, a Barakzai sardar and one of the brothers of Dost Mahomed Khan (ruler of Afghanistan). Its masonry, though pockmarked with holes and full of lead bullets, is strong and well cemented and, for this reason, it is to-day the oldest building above the ground in Peshawar. Round the garden is a wall with a tower now fallen into decay at each corner, to which—at one time—must have radiated from the 'Burj' broad alleys with marble-paved canals and fountains bordered with cypresses and Persian almonds—to make a 'paradise enow.'

The modern history of the Burj begins in the forties of the nineteenth century, when it became the first headquarters of the newly-formed Corps of Guides! Peshawar was still, nominally, in the hands of the Sikhs—that amazing people who in less than three hundred years have developed not only a personality and a religion, but a physical appearance of their own—though, after the defeat of the First Sikh War, they had accepted with ill grace the presence and the control of British 'politicals.' Paolo Avitabile, the most ruthless and efficient of Ranjit Singh's foreign generals, had departed in 1843 from Peshawar to his native Naples, Ranjit Singh himself was dead, and the government at Lahore had descended to the intriguing Maharani and her seditious court. On the border the Afghan—as ever—was watching and plotting, and there were no British troops—native or British—north of Lahore near 300 miles away. In the twofold contingency of a fierce enemy knocking at the gate and a quarrelsome, objectionable, ally within, it was obvious that a new mobile force under British officers—unhampered by tradition or equipment or training—was sadly needed. In 1838 Herbert Edwardes, in a letter to John Lawrence, then Quartermaster-General, had suggested the formation of such a force, but, as he had visualised himself as its first commandant, the scheme, unfortunately, fell to the ground. Now, in 1846, the time was again ripe for its creation and, under the auspices of Henry Lawrence, now the chief political officer in Lahore, the force was sanctioned. They were to be, in Lawrence's own words, 'a corps of men who could at a moment's notice act as guides<sup>1</sup> and interpreters to the troops in the field and, from their familiarity with every village dialect, would be able to collect intelligence beyond and within the border.' They were to be 'the right hand

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Guides' was first used in 1796, when, after Borghetto, Napoleon formed his 'Corps de Guides.' Napoleon's 'Guides' eventually became, first, the 'Corps d'Elite,' then his own 'Consular Guard' and, finally, the 'Imperial Guard.'

of the Army and the left of the Political.' Because they were intended to give and take hard blows, because it was hoped that they would beat the frontiersman at his own raiding game, they were to be recruited from any class of men habituated to the dangers and vicissitudes of border life—from Afridis and Gurkhas, from Sikhs and Hazars, from Wazirs and Pathans of every class, even from Kafirs, and were to be clothed in serviceable dust-colour ('Khaki') to match the 'mutti' and their own hills and fields.<sup>1</sup>

Three things they needed from the outset—the best commandant that the British service could provide, a suitable headquarters, and an open field on which to win their maiden spurs.

The first they found in Harry Burnett Lumsden. 'Joe' Lumsden was the ideal man for the job. He had started his military life in 1838 as an ensign in the 59th Bengal Native Infantry, but in 1842 had been seconded to the 33rd, with whom—as Quartermaster and Interpreter—he had taken part in Pollock's avenging march to Kabul. Back with his regiment again, he had been wounded at Sobraon and then—after a fortunate encounter with Henry Lawrence—he had been selected as a political officer—to join the famous band which included the Lawrences—John, Henry, George—James Abbott, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, Reynell Taylor—'men such as you will seldom see anywhere, but, when collected together, worth double and treble the number taken at haphazard'—and, after excellent work in the Kangra Valley, was ready for what he himself considered 'the finest appointment in the country.' He was known as a brave and dashing soldier, as a resolute and resourceful leader, and as possessed of a natural aptitude for border warfare and a natural gift for winning the affection of men of a turbulent and alien race. Moreover, with his commanding presence and his great black beard, he looked a 'burra Sahib.' Now that the ideal man had been found to inaugurate a great experiment, and he had been provided with two first-class subalterns in Peter Lumsden, his younger brother, and 'Rob Roy' Adams, the ideal headquarters was obviously the Burj. The tower itself was easily convertible into a mess and sleeping quarters for the officers, and, in the garden below, tents could be pitched to accommodate the first recruits. Later, when recruits flocked in so fast that vacancies had to be shot for and the Corps

<sup>1</sup> At a later date, when they were merged in the Punjab Frontier Force, the plain uniform of the Guides caused much friendly chaff from the rest of the 'Piffers' who had adopted the green facings of the Rifle Brigade, and were known as 'Siah Posh.'



had reached its allotted establishment, new quarters would have to be found and were found in October, 1851, at Mardan in the Yusufzai country, but at the beginning there was room and to spare.

And so soon as Lumsden had his nucleus—drilled by N.C.O.'s borrowed from his own regiment, the 55th—and trained—like the Afghan—to go off into the hills with seven days' rations on its backs, to camp under primitive conditions, to be always alert and ready for surprise or a scrap, he was off with 50 horsemen and 20 infantry—chiefly down countrymen and Persians—into the very Yusufzai country, in which the Guides were eventually to be stationed, on a man's job. The Sikh method of raising revenue was very simple. They assessed the local sirdars at so much in proportion to their holding of land and then, if it did not come in, used their troops to collect it and as much more as they could at the point of the bayonet. As this always ended in a fight, it was part of the policy of Henry Lawrence, now the chief 'Political' in Lahore, to persuade the landowners to come to amicable terms with their masters. For this purpose he made the fullest use of Lumsden and his little body of Guides who patrolled the countryside, keeping out of the way of the Sikhs, making contact with the 'maliks' whose sons and relations later became his best recruits and forming a rough and ready but equitable revenue settlement.

For a month or more all went well. But at last he was beaten. A village on the Buneir border, which on a previous occasion had kept a whole Sikh brigade at bay, turned nasty and threatening. Lumsden, with his scanty force, could avail nothing. So—to keep the peace of the border—Henry Lawrence had to come out from Peshawar with a force of Sikhs. An attack was staged for dawn. While the Sikhs were making a frontal movement, Lumsden and his Guides were to march all night, scramble up a rocky hill and turn the breastworks behind the village. All went like clockwork, but the Guides not only tasted powder, but lost their first man. Fattah Khan was caught by a picket and shot through both arms. Notwithstanding this, he did his best to account for his opponent but was blown up by the glowing ember of his matchlock, which he was trying to ignite, falling on a goatskin bag of powder which he had slashed and opened with his sword.

Later on, when a 'malik' robbed and tortured a travelling 'Bunia' and ran off to the hills with a bag of Government money, it was the Guides who entered the village and captured the renegade

by 'swagger' and pure bluff—'We put the inhabitants in a horrid fright by keeping our horses clattering round the place and calling on the men to come out and give up their arms before we opened great guns on them.'

Adventure, surprise, mobility are essentials of frontier warfare, and it is no wonder that after these early experiences when, in the hot weather of 1847, the Guides were again about the Burj, the best men of the frontier wanted to join the Corps. For the next four years, apart from the time of the Second Sikh War, when Peshawar was once more an Afghan city and the Guides were moved down to Lahore, they were kept eternally busy 'bringing the hill gentlemen in the neighbourhood to order for plundering'—from 1849, as part of the redoubtable 'Piffers'—the New Punjab Frontier Force.<sup>1</sup>

With their future history after their move to Mardan in 1851, even with their amazing march to Delhi—500 miles in 27 days—in the first days of the Mutiny, or with their intimate relation to every phase and development of frontier warfare up to the present time, we are not concerned, for this is the story—not of the Guides, but of the Burj—and to the Burj we must return.

With the departure of the Guides, the Burj, which stood by itself between the city and the new cantonment—from which it was separated by marsh and trees—became for a while a small-pox hospital. As, however, it was thoroughly disliked by the patients, who complained that it was haunted and that ghosts threw them out of their beds, it was again dismantled and became a shrine for Mohammedans, who used to go there and burn small earthen lamps to win favour with Allah and with the spirits of the departed.

Its new history really begins in 1853. On September 10th of that year a Ghazi squats all day in the Residency Garden at Peshawar, apparently immobile, actually full of the lust of blood. In the evening, Colonel Frederick Mackeson, the Resident, comes out of his house for a stroll. The Ghazi approaches with a paper and in a moment there is a flash and the blood of a British officer is sprinkled on the lintel of his door. The logical successor to Frederick Mackeson is Herbert Edwardes, and with Edwardes' appointment, a new régime is inaugurated. Like Mackeson, Edwardes knew and loved the frontier. Unlike Mackeson,

<sup>1</sup> The Guides Infantry is now the 5/12 Frontier Force Rifles; the Guides Cavalry, the 10th Q.A.V.O. Cavalry (Frontier Force Regiment).

Edwardes belonged to that little band of soldiers—Cromwellian not only in their fighting capacity but in their religious faith and zeal—who believed that war was only the clearing-ground for the Christian missionary. They held that India could only be regenerated by conversion to Christianity, and that the pure and undefiled word of the Bible was the essential textbook for every Indian school. They favoured the immediate and widespread introduction of Christian missions, they were firmly convinced that the people of Peshawar were religious enough to want some religion, even that of the conquerors, and they visualised a Christian Benares in the North-West.

As soon as he had settled down to his new work, Edwardes at once, on December 19, called a meeting in the Freemason's Hall in cantonments to discuss the whole question of missionary enterprise.

At this meeting, which was attended by Colonel Martin, afterwards a missionary, the Brigade Major, the Civil Surgeon and three other officers, three thousand rupees were subscribed on the spot. and when, in 1858, Herbert Edwardes left Peshawar, he gave his own house with its rent as a subscription to the Church Missionary Society as 'a parting offering of my own and my dear wife's goodwill and earnest wish for its increasing prosperity and usefulness. The house is in good order and should rent for a hundred to a hundred and twenty rupees, which should replace our failing help and also provide for annual repairs. Do with it whatever is best for the interest of the Missions, for that is our object.' This house has now been sold, but his library, his books and the chair in which he sat still remain and within the city, amid its noise and heat and smell, is the All Saints (Edwardes Memorial) Church and, about the Burj, in the garden in which the Guides first camped, cluster the buildings of the Afghan Mission Hospital and the Afghan Mission School for Girls.

Moreover, the Burj itself, where once a Mogul held high revel, where, later, dome and walls echoed to the sound of shot and clash of arms, where Harry Lumsden and his comrades sat to plot the capture of bandit and brigand, is now a chapel. The Burj has become the power-house of the missionary activities of Peshawar. Its copper lamps of Yarkand, its altar of Kashmir, its carpets of Turkestan which are the gifts of the Guides, are significant of its widespread activities, and often, before the bronze lamp of remembrance, those who work in the Hospital and in the School com-

memorate all those who have fought the good fight on the North-West frontier, that the Frontier may have peace.

The Hospital itself is one of the most amazing places in India. From its walls Mrs. Starr went forth in 1923 to rescue Mollie Ellis from her Pathan captors, on its verandah Dr. Starr, her husband, was murdered, from the remotest villages of south central Asia, with all their kinsfolk, men and women eternally come down by camel, by ass, on foot, seeking help which is never refused. They seldom become Christians, they never say, 'Thank you. God will reward you and, therefore, you need no gratitude from us,' they never cease to be of the Frontier—superstitious, cruel, dirty, revengeful—but still they come and still the healing work goes on. It is a revelation to accompany the doctor on his daily rounds. Here is a man from a Thieves' Bazaar, there a woman whose nose has been cut off for infidelity, here a man whose splints are so tight that his limb has withered, there another whose face has been burnt by the 'healing' acid of an ignorant leech. A small boy is making mudpies on the ground, who, yesterday, between his childish whisperings of 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild'—taught him by an Indian probationer—was heard to mutter, 'I hate my father's enemy. When I am a man, I will shoot him. I hate him and will always try to kill him.' A girl of twelve, slowly recovering from a diseased hip, is no longer in her bed. She has been taken away by her relations in the night, because the stone of truce between her tribal village and that of her neighbours has been kicked away and she too must play her part in the feud of blood which has once more been renewed. An old man—threescore years and ten and more—mumbles in his sleep, 'I may be old and thin, but I am still a match for any two men.' A knife, kept in the bed to ward off the evil eye, falls to the ground, disturbed by a shaken pillow. An old woman, waiting for an operation, is covering her nails with henna—because the devil hates red nails, while those in pain touch their amulets—an inscribed verse from the Koran, a stone blessed by a mullah—about their neck or wrist, while one of the most promising patients—the victim of tight splinting ordered by a hakim—has been carried off before dawn to visit a 'ziarah,' the tomb of a holy man, in order that its clay may be rubbed on her aseptic wound. Back she will come indeed, but the process of healing has to begin once more. Just as the old woman, cooking her chupatties on a flat piece of iron over a home-made brazier, cannot understand why the woodsmoke should irritate her

husband's weakened eyes, so beyond the frontier cleanliness is an unknown virtue, and though perforce—at the will of the 'Sahib'—the inmates of the hospital are now clean, once they depart, they will again assume the dead-brown colour of their native soil, their women will once more bear their children on a heap of refuse and ashes and refuse and dust, the flamingo-dyed beards of their warriors will again be full of lice, and bathing—except for ceremonial washing—will again cease.

And yet the Hospital—unthanked, unconvertng—continues. For every man, woman and child the doctor has his word. He listens to the man who does not want to be let out on his unlucky day—'They will not cook food for me when I return'; he removes the lump of coal from the milk of the new-born child; he playfully tugs the beard of an ancient-obvious aristocrat of his kind and—through Jacob and Laban—claiming descent from Abraham; he pats a Turkoman boy on the back; he chaffs with a smiling phrase the head mullah of the Mehtar of Chitral; he has a pleasant word for the child-wife with the sore eyes—a cheap purchase at thirteen rupees.

Every one of those iron folk from 'the hills of iron creeds and gruesome deeds' is his to help and cure.

'A poor man saved by thee shall make thee rich.

A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong.

Thou shalt be served thyself by every service that thou renderest.'

And this is the modern history of Said Khan's Burj.

## FLOWER POT END.

BY R. H. MOTTRAM.

[*Patsy Curell lives in Flower Pot End and works half-time for her aunt, Rose Abigail, housekeeper at the Rectory, St. Mary-le-Pleasant, to the Rev. Edmund Curtice: years ago Rose loved his brother, Phil, who stole and ran away. Edmund inspects Flower Pot End, now scheduled as a 'slum clearance' area. Patsy's cousin, Walter, takes her to Holgate where a stranger, half tramp, half gentleman, asks her if she is Rose or Rose's daughter. This is Phil, shabby and impenitent: he revisits the Rectory, is welcomed by Rose and housed reluctantly by Edmund. Phil leaves, Edmund goes on holiday, Phil returns, finds Patsy and is hidden by Rose in Flower Pot End, now cleared of its inhabitants. Late at night, just after Edmund's return, Rose is woken by smoke and men running towards Flower Pot End.*]

## CHAPTER X.

### PHIL'S FRESH START.

WHEN Philip Curtice parted from his brother on the steps of the Rectory, he was ten pounds richer than when he had stolen up those steps, twenty-four hours earlier, and found Rose Abigail alone in the house. In return for this sum, and partly at least because he was still fond of his brother in his peculiar way, and respected him, and would admit at moments, that he had treated him badly, he had given his promise to make a fresh start, to try and redeem the time and the opportunities he had wasted. At the moment, rested and refreshed, fed and cared for, having tasted again for a brief space the ordered comfort and scrupulous consideration of the home in which he had grown up, he really meant what he said, so far as anyone of his dilapidated character and shiftless habit could mean anything. He walked firmly down to the station, booked and took train for the only place he knew in which he might find some casual job. He knew and had known for years of no other kind, and the necessity for remaining under an assumed name, and his remoteness from any sort of reference of good character, left no other avenue open to him.

For the first two or three days the spell of that respite he had enjoyed at the Rectory was on him, and he made what were for



him vigorous efforts to find such work as he was still capable of. Times were against him. Every year, every month almost, the system of employment and remuneration by which the world obtained the goods and services it required became increasingly rigid. There was less and less place for anyone of his sort, invariably casual, and now ageing, beyond hope of learning any of the newer professions, thrust out of those semi-skilled, wholly precarious jobs which had been once not too hard to obtain, for those who were forced to be content with the low pay, and lack of status, that he had to accept.

He knew it all by heart. The process of gentlemanly begging, of importuning for jobs was familiar enough to him. It had only become increasingly stereotyped and difficult, that was all. And he was older, he began to feel it. His small store of money dwindled, and he was faced, as often before, by the choice between lingering out a little longer than otherwise, at a very low level of existence, or doing himself very much better, for a day or two, in the hope that something would turn up. He waited, in fact, until he had but two pounds left, and with that sum in his pocket he marched into the dining-room of the best hotel within walking distance, fixed the waiter with his eye, demanded the menu, and ordered the best dinner he could get. He felt it might move him to some decision.

It did. He sat it out to the full, and over his coffee and liqueur and cigar, he found himself emboldened and convinced. This was how he ought always to feel. This was how he ought always to live. He had bought himself some new linen and a hat and shoes, and it amused him to see the way in which the glances of the waiters and other diners would occasionally seek his feet and his head, trying to reconcile the neat footwear and unfrayed cuffs, with the baggy trousers and seedy jacket, the air of promiscuousness and watchfulness that he could not keep from his face and movements, with the bearing and tone of a gentleman, that he had no need to simulate. Ah! they little knew how flaccid was the note-case that stood between him and a meal at a coffee stall and a bed wherever one might be found.

At length he could sit there no longer, without causing remark. He got up, tipped the waiter, and went. He had made up his mind. Edmund had helped him once, and must help him again. It was too late to catch the mail, but an early morning train would serve. He could spend the night in the waiting-room. He did.

Even so, he had more time on his hands than he knew what to do with. He did not want to walk up to the Rectory in broad daylight and find Edmund out. He was no longer so confident as he had been the night before. He waited until it was dusk, and had a drink. It cost almost the last coin he had. The Rectory door was latched this time and he rang the bell with faint impatience. It was opened by that girl.

What with despair, drink on an empty stomach, a feeling of guilt, and another feeling that had been often present with him lately, a feeling that nothing was real, that voices sounded in his ears, and shapes moved before his eyes, merely as they might at the Talkies, he was incapable of taking any considered course. He knew he could do what he liked with women, and proceeded to do it with this young thing. She was unexpectedly stiff-necked, but he got round her, of course. It was a blow that Edmund was away, and he didn't quite know what he should do next, when—in walked Rose. It was easy then. He could do as he liked with Rose. She could be awkward, unexpectedly difficult, but she couldn't send him away. He appreciated her difficulty about having him in the Rectory, while Edmund was out, but Rose in a difficulty was easier to manage than Rose out of one. No brains, poor soul, but plenty of feeling.

So he consented to go over and sleep in the abandoned workshop in Flower Pot End. He had had to doss down in many a worse spot, and Rose would see to it that he did not starve. Once again, a good night on Edmund's camp bed, a good meal that Rose brought him, worked wonders.

It was on the second day that he began to feel restless and ill at ease. He wasn't locked in, he had discovered that. But he didn't want to go out. What was there to go for? And it was lucky he didn't, for all at once he heard voices in Orchard Court and two individuals whom he didn't know and didn't want to, were standing there discussing apparently what they were going to do with the place. Luckily the windows of the workshop were already furred with dust. And these people didn't want to come in. One of them—a fellow, a person, who, years ago would have touched his hat, Phil felt sure, to anyone of the name of Curtice, gave the stone quoins of the old gatehouse a slap with his hands, and made some remark as to the difficulty of getting it down. There were some drastic changes on foot evidently, but the effect on Phil, in his then mood, was one of intense irritation. He might



smile at Edmund, laugh at everything Edmund stood for, be facetious about the parish. But when these jumped-up blighters began proposing to pull it about, that was quite another matter. It made him cross. He might kick over the traces, if he liked. But it was subversive for people of the lower orders to come altering the whole structure of society that made Edmund a Rector, and the inhabitants of Flower Pot End poor people who were his natural care. Phil had no general views on the regeneration of the world by Housing or shifting of the population. He had been preoccupied, almost since his coming of age, with what he considered his bad luck and other people spoke of as his fault. This idea of pulling down and altering Flower Pot End, now that he was brought face to face with it, and understood what it involved, seemed to him monstrous. He spoke to Rose about it. She didn't understand, of course, but it rankled in his mind.

Rose brought him a good supper. She was a little flustered with Edmund's imminent return and very scared lest he, Phil, did 'something rash,' as she called it. He forbore to smile. She left him and left the whisky bottle with him. He didn't point it out to her.

He sat down, on that lonely and abandoned place, in which, as a boy, he had come to see 'Tough'un' Blake the rat-catcher, as he called himself, 'poacher' as others called him; old Billy, the last craftsman, the last apprentice lantern-maker who could do anything with metal, bend it into lovely brackets for signs, or fan-lights for doors, who had helped to make the great gates of the new park at Hoake. Already in Phil's time people had ceased to want such things, too expensive they said, too beautiful for them to understand, they meant. Then there had been old Mother Cavagnari with a magenta scarf bound round her greying black ringlets, who had been born in Italy, who, with her son, trundled out a barrel organ, and made ice-cream—'hokey-pokey' it was called—under conditions which led to the children of the middle classes being forbidden to touch it. All that old world had gone, it is true, and the successors had not had the same character. But that seemed to him a very poor reason for turning them all out, making them live in conditions they didn't understand, didn't really like, and couldn't afford. They had all been Edmund's parishioners too. But he, Phil, had understood them better than Edmund. That was why he resented their displacement. Whatever was put here instead, and whoever inhabited it, would not be

the vivid 'characters' he remembered at the only time in his life that he cared to remember anyone. He had no use for people nowadays. They were all against him, he had slipped down and they kept him down by not having slipped. Even Edmund with his virtues, his devotion to duty did that. Even Rose, though Rose was a good sort and he could always get round her.

'Let me see,' he said to himself, his voice echoing round the empty place, 'what am I going to say to old Edmund?'

His brother had now come uppermost in his mind, by some chain of allusion. He must say something to Edmund. Now that the necessity was so much nearer, he felt the difficulty, and was obscurely conscious that he hadn't treated Edmund too well. He helped himself to a good whisky to see if that liquefied his ideas. 'Look here, Edmund, I'm awfully sorry about this!' That was as far as he got. There he stuck. He didn't know what came next.

It was quite true. He was sorry. He didn't want to wander about cadging for a job. Not he. If he had money he wouldn't plague anyone for a job. He knew plenty of nice places to stay at, where he could have lived very well and not at all expensively. But he'd spent what little money there was from their father, so long ago that he couldn't remember what it felt like to have any, and now he had none, and had to try and earn some. It was only right that Edmund should help him a bit. And it was quite true, he was sorry to have to ask him. 'I haven't often asked you for help, Edmund!' He could say that. It was true enough. It was over a year since he had written. Once a year surely wasn't too often to ask your own brother. Of course, he had come down on Edmund only a fortnight ago, but that didn't count. Didn't it? He wasn't certain, and took some more whisky to see if it would make him. He wasn't sure if it did. What it did make him think was this:

'Edmund, you don't realise what they're up to. Forgive me, old man, but these people are stealing your parish from beneath your feet. They're moving out all the folk who really matter to you, and leaving you with a few caretakers and those who use the offices and warehouses round about here, in the daytime only. Now to show you I'm not really such a waster as you think . . .'

No, perhaps one wouldn't say that. It sounded a little like taking offence. And he didn't quite know how to go on afterwards. He wanted to do something spectacular, something which would

put to flight the new owners of Flower Pot End, and bring back its old inhabitants, and make it all very much as it always was.

The exact way to achieve this end didn't occur to him with the obviousness it should have done. They were going to pull down the existing buildings and put up something else, he didn't grasp what, and didn't particularly want to. It was going to be difficult to prevent them, somehow, it was always easier to pull a thing down rather than to keep it up, particularly if you'd paid for it.

He took some more whisky. It was getting dark. It must be late. Edmund was late.

'Edmund, you're late!' Would that be a good way to open the conversation? It would put Edmund in the wrong, wouldn't it? That would be a nice change for old Edmund who had always been in the right, and able, from that eminence, to lecture one.

And then the thing would be to go on quickly.

'Look here, Edmund, about these chaps who've got hold of Flower Pot End, what-are-we-going-to-do-about-it?'

The words seemed rather to run themselves together, but the point was not to let old Edmund get a start. Must get in first, and keep going:

'Now, look here, Edmund. I'll tell you what to do?'

Yes, but what. That was the thing. No good waiting until one was confronted with Edmund. Must have it all ready. It was getting very dark. You couldn't see to think. And Rose had taken the flash-lamp with her. Never mind. There were a lot of old shavings and some paper about, and he still had matches, he could light them.

Wagging his head with the profundity of his cunning, he gathered together the odds and ends of inflammable material Rose had carefully swept into a corner, stuffed them into the rusty grate and lighted them. They flared up and burning ends of shavings spluttered out and fell upon the floor. He stamped them out. Now he could think.

No, he couldn't. The light flickered on walls and ceilings, flickered and danced on the bottle of whisky. He took some more.

Well, there it was, he was desperately tired and sleepy and Edmund hadn't come. If Edmund had come, he'd have told Edmund what to do. But Edmund hadn't. That was his affair. What to do about what? He couldn't remember, except that he had to prevent someone from getting hold of Flower Pot End.

Ah! Now he saw, as he stared, glass in hand, at the dancing flames. Burn it all up. That would settle it. They couldn't have the place then, if it were burnt up, and burnt down. Up and down. He was tired, sat on the camp bed and put his feet up to rest them. He knocked over the whisky bottle. Well, Rose would clear that up. He must really have a sleep, and all the rest must wait until the morning. He must have a sleep. He did.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *RECTOR'S RETURN.*

EDMUND CURTICE returned with mixed feelings to that which people now spoke of as his 'parish' or even his 'job' and no longer as his 'Cure of Souls.' One strong feeling predominated, an anxiety, an urge, almost a compunction, a desire to be back at once with those to whom he stood in the spiritual relationship of a father. The other, far less weighty, sedulously hidden, but persistent, was a regret for the lovely days on the mountains, the dewy morning, when, with an early start he had joined parties going up to one of the huts, which now formed the limit of his climbing capacity. Then there had been the lunch in the cool clean air, on the verge of the everlasting snow, the siesta in that strong sunlight and herb-scented air. Then the late afternoon descent, amid a gradually warmer and warmer valley atmosphere, of goats and cows, baking pine woods, and fields of flowers, down again to the little hotel of unpainted wood with its wide veranda, long cool and dark dining-room, with all those pleasant foreign associations. Somehow, there, one came in so hungry that there was no disgrace in eating heartily and with gusto, and even talking about food. The light foreign beer was overshadowed by no moral question. Then one might stroll bare-headed under the wonderful stars, with amicably reeking pipe, relaxed limbs, full stomach, quiet heart, and ears soothed by the constant roar of the stream. There it lay, all that land of memory, that annual escape that always added another memory, that recurring blessed gap in his strenuous, devoted, dedicated life.

It lay all hidden. As the train, late with holiday traffic and delayed by some slight mishap, drew towards the city, scene of his labour, and familiar English fields, even more familiar English

suburbs unique in the world, and ran through one of the great new housing estates towards which his parishioners were steadily being drawn, he was visited with a kind of excitement. He got up, moved from window to window, knocked out and put away his pipe, brushed his coat and blew the dust from his hat. He was no longer the happy holiday-maker. He was the Reverend Edmund Curtice. His face wore an expression of dignified and thankful contentment. If, in his heart, there was some other feeling, it was not allowed to appear.

He treated himself to a taxi from the station. His bag was heavy and it was the last act of his holiday. He would not carry that bag or spare himself from walking for the ensuing eleven months. The taxi stopped at the foot of Church Alley. He got out, retrieved his bag and paid the man.

There it was, the majestic stone edifice, foreign to the century into which it had survived, an early spiritual and even material fortress against ever-present wrong, that had changed its nature, a place of sanctuary against violence that had ceased to exist. Before it stretched God's Acre, now a garden. Beside it ran Church Alley, now a third-rate way for foot passengers. Under its shadow was the Rectory, rebuilt in all the comely certainty and proportion of Georgian times. Next to it lay Flower Pot End where poor men dwelt on what had been rich men's ground. How many of them had been caught up in a yet further phase of social development, and carried yet farther on, he wondered, to places outside his scope, almost outside his comprehension, great congeries of working-class people, with no admixture of any other sort, and little or no provision for religion of any kind.

Then all those associations left him before the major one of his own house. He opened the door, he did not expect it to be latched. It wasn't. He expected to be greeted by Rose. He was. He heard her easy confident tread as she came up from the kitchen, and stood beaming at the top of the stairs.

'Well, Rose, here I am!'

'I hope you're well, and have had a good holiday. You are late!'

'Yes, there was some slight delay. However, here I am!'

'Aren't you dreadfully hungry?'

'I shall enjoy my supper as usual, I've no doubt.'

'I've kept it back for you. After all that foreign food.'

'I won't be a moment. I must wash.'

'That will just give me time.'

Seated before a savoury-smelling and steaming dish, from which she had just removed the cover, he resumed his duties, much as a walker, resting, slips his shoulder-strap back into position to resume his way.

'Anything of importance waiting for me?'

'There are the last two days' letters, that I couldn't forward. They don't look much.'

'No. I don't suppose so. Anyone called?'

'No!'

'Nothing special happened?'

'Nothing that won't keep until to-morrow.'

'That's right then!' He sat back, his mouth full, his heart even fuller of profound gratitude for all this loving care and attention. Did ever any man come back to a home so well ordered and kept for him? She had lighted the gas, and he surveyed her:

'You're looking very well, Rose!'

'I'm all right, thank you!'

'Let me see. You've been busy, cleaning. I hope I shall be able to find all my things when I want them!'

It was the perennial joke.

'I hope so!'

'You've taken care, I'm sure. I hope you had quite enough help!'

'Oh, yes. There was Patsy Curell, and Mrs. Allman. She's moved, by the way. Gone out to Meadowsweet!'

'Ah! Have many of the others gone from Flower Pot End?'

'They're all gone!'

The Rector laid down his knife and fork.

'There now, I didn't mean to bother you with all that, to-night. Time enough in the morning. I'll tell you all about it. Could you fancy some plums?'

'Yes, I think I could!' the Rector dutifully replied. The plums and a junket were brought with a minimum of delay and he dutifully ate a plateful. But had they been gooseberries or loganberries or other unseasonable fruit, and had the junket been custard, he wouldn't have known. He was thinking of Flower Pot End. He had slipped back into harness. He was the Reverend Edmund Curtice already and no longer a happy guest in an hotel half-way up a mountain.

He roused himself at the sound of Rose's light footsteps.



'Yes, come and clear away. It's disgracefully late and you've had a long day, I expect. You'll want to be getting to bed.'

'But have you had enough? There's no hurry on my account.'

'Yes, I've done well. I shall be glad to go up. I sat up in a train all last night!'

'I always say you do things that take away half the good of your holiday!'

'I don't know. I did enjoy it. You saw how beautiful it was by the postcard I sent you!'

'Yes. Thank you very much. It looked lovely. And you do look the better, I must say!'

'You don't look any the worse, Rose!'

'No, I'm all right!'

'That splendid. There's nothing in these letters. Now, tomorrow, I must start in and work. Eight o'clock breakfast!'

'Couldn't you have breakfast a little later, just the first morning?'

'No. Couldn't think of it. Good night!'

'Good night, sir!'

He mounted the familiar stair. Ah! the bathroom, the one thing we still do better in England. He luxuriated in a lengthy, superheated bath. Regarding his toes, stained and hardened with walking, he thought:

'Wonderful woman, really. Doesn't look her age. Devoted. never tired. She might have been on a holiday herself by her looks. Perhaps my being away is a holiday for her!'

He heaved himself out, dried, drew on his pyjamas, and padded across to his room. A moment's kneeling thankfulness and he was in bed and asleep.

He dreamed, long and pleasantly in that deep sleep, but was conscious after a time that his dream was deteriorating. Believing himself to be still in the little narrow bedroom in his hotel, he fancied he had to catch a train. He must get up. The smoke from the little engine just across the road was invading his room by the open window and little Adolf, the porter, was knocking at his door. He must get up, and laboriously he set himself to do so. He was so deeply asleep that it took him some time to swim up to the surface, as though he had dived too deep into some bathing-pool. He became conscious that beside the continuous knocking, the voice he heard was not Adolf's, but Rose's voice, but at first, of course, there did not seem to be anything odd in this. He even

got so far as to sit on the side of the bed and cry, as he drew on the most necessary articles of clothing, 'Coming, coming!' before it struck him that Rose must have something important to say. And the smell was horrid. He hastened and, suitably equipped, opened the door.

The first thing he noticed was the state of mind Rose was in. She had put on her proper black dress and shoes, but her hair was disordered and her face caused him distress at once. It was all distorted, and her eyes were staring with terror.

'Oh, sir—oh, Mr. Edmund!'

'What is it? Quick!'

'Flower Pot End's on fire!'

He was not yet completely awake, and stumbled downstairs beside her. The front door was open so she must have been out. There were a lot of people about in the dim light, smoke, and smell, and behind it all, a sinister noise.

'Here are your shoes!' He understood that, the thing he couldn't grasp was, that Rose wanted him to tell the policemen something.

'There's someone in Orchard Court. They only say there isn't when I tell them. They say it was closed. You tell them!'

'But you told me everyone had gone!'

He sat on the chest in the hall, staring at her, trying to arouse his mind and gather his faculties. The one thing that was clear to him was the fearful state Rose was in. She was clasping her hands in front of her, in a gesture of supplication which struck him at once as exaggerated and theatrical. He was inclined to tell her not to do that, but grasped that she really was trying to say something of importance. She got it out at last with a gesture almost as violent as if she were vomiting.

'It's Mr. Phil. He's in the old workshop!'

'Nonsense. Phil isn't here. I sent him away weeks ago before my holiday!'

(Had she gone queer with shock? Hardly credible, she was the sanest person!)

'He's there. He's there. They won't believe me and they can't get into Orchard Court. It's all blazing, and he'll be killed!'

Her voice mounted into a half-shriek that made him stir faster than the nonsense she was talking. He went out with her, past unmoved efficient-looking policemen, the red fire-engine was at

the end of the alley, the line of thick riveted or cased hosing lay all over the place and there seemed to be as much water underfoot as smoke overhead. He spoke to the nearest sergeant, and his appearance and voice gained him immediate attention. He was passed on to an Inspector, who heard him politely enough, but with taciturn incredulity. It was the very piece of the building next the passage from Garden Court to Orchard Court which had fallen in. The old workshop roof was blazing, what might be the state of the solidly built lower storey it was impossible to say. The firemen had not been able to get over the barrier of flames and *débris*, and its windows and door were all on the opposite side.

'We'll see what can be done, sir, but it is a funny thing that there should be someone in there, with the gate locked. Of course you never can tell what tramps will do!'

The Rector was too astonished and shaken to remonstrate. He had not yet become accustomed to the idea of Phil being somewhere in those blazing buildings. Could Rose be wrong? She wasn't often. But how odd, that if Phil had come back, she should know of it, and not have told him first thing, the night before. The only excuse was that she thought him too tired. But it was a breach of confidence. And if she were wrong, her mind a little turned by the shock of being roused like this, could he ask the firemen to take a considerable risk for an illusion? His attention was diverted from these thoughts by the Inspector saying gruffly to a sergeant, 'What on earth are all these women?'

The women, in fact, were Rose and her nieces, the two girls in raincoats that looked as if they did not conceal much else. Patsy was in as disturbed a state as Rose. Her little face was green. In the background were Curell himself and a young man the Rector didn't recognise, at the moment, but who had a sort of familiar look, as though he might be an Abigail relation, and a kind of undress smartness such as members of the services may show, when clad only in shirt and trousers and shoes. Ah, yes, he remembered. The cousin from Seaton, who was a soldier.

The clamour became general. Rose couldn't keep quiet. Patsy was frantic, exclaiming, 'I know he's there! I know he's there!'

'How do you know?' the Inspector managed to interpose.

'Because I took him there!' The conviction in tone and look were obvious to the Inspector as to everyone else. The Inspector said, 'Oh!' shortly, and glanced at the Rector as if he were not

quite sure if this were a suitable conversation for such a person to hear.

'And what's more,' vociferated Patsy, 'my cousin Walter will go and get him out!'

'We haven't called for volunteers yet!' the Inspector answered with a certain dignity. 'Hi—George——' he cried to a helmeted figure, who was directing a spurting hose—and before plunging into a mass of technicalities he turned to the Rector.

'You'd like to get Miss Abigail away, sir, wouldn't you? Here, Curell, take these girls home. We'll see what we can do!'

The Rector asked nothing better. The scene, the people that he had known so long, were all degenerating into something strange to him. He turned with decision to Rose, to motion her away, and Curell made one of his half-humorous remarks to the girls. But the one fell as flat as the other. Rose seemed deliberately avoiding his eye. The girls had always been, in the semi-comic phrase, much better men than their father. It was that young Patsy who resolved the momentary hesitation, in these odd circumstances, in which no one seemed to be his normal self, any more than the showers of sparks, the hissing of flames and jets of water, the wreaths of pungent drifting smoke, were normal to his parish. She leapt at the young man, flung her arms round his neck, gave him a resounding kiss, and pushed him towards the busy firemen, then she grabbed her aunt by the arm and dragged her forcibly away. Curell wheeled after them, with some helpless witticism, which was inaudible as ineffective. The Rector was left with the elder girl, Violet, who seemed by far the most collected member of the party. The only thing was, he knew very little about her. She seldom attended services. He believed her to be respectable and hard working, but otherwise she was a comparative stranger. Perhaps that was an advantage at the present extraordinary moment. She came up to him with what he felt to be a becoming manner.

'I'm afraid my aunt and my sister are rather upset,' she said, sensibly enough, 'perhaps you wouldn't mind, sir, if I look after them a little!'

'Certainly not. Pray come in and do what you can!' He fell into step beside her, behind the others.

Once away from the noise and confusion of the catastrophe, and gradually recovering his faculties from the sense of shock and unreality, he could not keep back the question as they crossed the alley.

'What do you know of this extraordinary occurrence?'

'Nothing much, except that the police woke us. They were afraid at first that the fire was extending our way. But they seem to have stopped that!'

'Yes, yes. But I mean, the statement made by those two——' He indicated the tottering form of Rose, and the clinging and supporting one of Patsy, struggling up the Rectory steps together.

'I'm sure there's something in it, from the state my sister is in. She's excitable, but she doesn't fancy things for nothing. Nor Aunt Rose. Of course I didn't know. They certainly seem to have put—someone, in the old workshop!'

She waited decently for him to say:

'Come in, would you?' on the steps, and left him standing in the hall, as she ran down the stairs after the others.

He turned instinctively to his tidy and spotless study, sat down at his desk, as he did every week-day morning of his busy life, and began by sheer force of habit to turn over the accumulated mail, the contents of which mixed with such consecutive thoughts as he was capable of.

'The Chairman and Committee request the pleasure . . .' he read.

That elder girl was discreet and well spoken. He braced himself. There must be something in it. Phil back, and in hiding. Well, that was best!

But then came a great surge of sheer human feeling. Phil, his younger brother, dear in spite of all his faults, needing all the more help and protection because of them; Phil, whom his mother on her death-bed had especially confided to his care! He half-rose to go back to that awful, unspeakable calamity, the distant sound of which came to him through the windows. But what could he do, save get in the way? He forced himself back into his chair and read:

'I beg to remind you that your subscription to the——' The words that he could see so clearly, the meaning that he grasped exactly, the ordinary routine of his professional life, were somehow remote as objects became when looked at through a telescope reversed, sharply defined and unmistakable, but tiny, and an immense distance away.

The thing was stunning in its unexpectedness, and its unaccustomed physical violence. The confused rumour of it threw him into an uneasy coma. He saw himself get up, he saw the passage-

way, he saw the deserted Garden Court, he saw even the pathetic little green and white painted window-boxes on the sill of one of the deserted tenements, with a few dead plants and some scattered earth. He saw the police and firemen, uniformed and busy. They were bringing Phil, and Phil was injured, but contrite, until they were face to face. Then the old bravado crept back into that sorrowfully loved face. It was the sort of thing Phil had always had a fatal faculty for getting mixed up with.

'Playing with fire!' The phrase started to his lips. Phil had always played with the dangerous element, ever since nursery days, to everyone's danger, but more particularly his own. And it had a double, a reduplicating significance. He had played with fire in every conceivable way in which a meaning could be given to the term. He must say something, and relief, anger, anxiety and reproof rushed confusedly to his lips, and the effort to utter brought him back to himself. He had not moved. He was sitting at his desk, trembling so much that he could hardly read the printed title on the paper in his hand.

'The Annual Report and Financial Statement to be presented at the General Meeting on Thursday, the——'

He flung it down. He couldn't stand it. He must know.

He had half-risen, but a decorous knock at the door made him resume his seat.

'Come in!'

The door opened, and in came that elder girl of Curell's sensible, self-controlled. He admired those qualities more than any others. It was a pity she had little or no religious life, that he knew anything of, but obviously she had had sound moral training. A compliment to the Sunday School in which she had been brought up! She was carrying a tray on which were a cup of tea, and two neatly cut pieces of bread and butter, on a plate.

'Oh, thank you. That is very thoughtful of you. Put it down here!'

She did so with a slight inclination.

'How is Rose!'

'In rather a bad way, I'm afraid, sir, we've got her to go and lie down. Patsy is with her. It would be a good thing if the Doctor saw her later!'

'Dear me, as bad as that!'

'She's not more than half-conscious, sir, but we'll try and get her to sleep.'



'Yes, poor thing, if you can.'

'I'll get your breakfast ready shortly, sir, then you'll be better!'

'Thank you. I don't know that there's anything I can do!'

He said it out of sheer weakness and confusion, and was reassured by the steady reply:

'No, sir! They'll let you know, of course!'

She went out and closed the door quietly behind her. A well-mannered girl.

The hot tea revived and steadied him, but it also rendered his perceptions clearer. It made him think.

What on earth was the matter with Rose? He knew she was devoted to his service, and was likely to be distressed by Phil's turning up in his own absence, still more by the threat of danger to him, or indeed to any member of the family. But why all this concealment, and why such an exhibition of feeling, and how had that young niece of Rose's come to know of this very private family matter, that one only confided to the very old and well-trying retainers such as Rose. Could it be that Rose . . . ? Could Phil have . . . ? The ugly, unmentionable alternatives presented themselves, one after another, only to be summarily dismissed, of course. But they left, stronger than ever, the necessity for doing something, to probe the mystery, to deal with the situation. Resignation was a Christian virtue no doubt, and mystery part of all true religion but Edmund Curtice, besides being a priest, was a member of the responsible, the initiating class of the country. He must get up from his chair and inform himself on these matters, and direct the issue. He put down his tea-cup with decision and pushed away the plate.

As he rose, the words of that girl Violet returned to him with sudden ominous resonance.

'They'll let you know!' The phrase was quite familiar to him. One particular office had to be performed by him at the beginning of life, another at the end. 'They'll let you know' meant that he might be required. But Phil wasn't dead! Wasn't he? How did he know?

He could bear it no longer. He got up and strode across the hall and wrenched open the front door. Unheard amid the other unusual noises, an ambulance had been backed right up the paved surface of Church Alley. The Inspector was there. Men were lifting a stretcher. He hurried, but the Inspector barred the way.

'I shouldn't look just now, sir. My men will do all that's

necessary. The hospital people will send for you, no doubt. Hurry up there !'

'Is he badly hurt?' was all the Rector could get out.

'Not for me to say, sir. Anyhow, they give them twenty-four hours at the hospital! Right away, there!'

A door was slammed, the ambulance began sliding back with a grinding noise.

'But, Inspector . . .' His voice trembled, so did his knees. But the Inspector was not looking at him, but beyond him. He turned to follow the direction of that good-humoured, bovine gaze, just now sharpened by professional emergency.

There, at the top of the steps, straining out of the arms of the two girls, was Rose, hardly recognisable. Never before had his housekeeper appeared, in private, much less in public, in such a state of disorder. Her hair had come down, her eyes were starting from her head.

'Look after that woman!' commanded the Inspector. But, before they could control her, Rose gave one fearful shriek, and collapsed.

Although the evening was warm, the dusk began to 'draw' in as Fred Curell put it, and he, with his daughter Patsy, sat beside the stove in the back of the shop. The desolate smell of wet charred wood still permeated the place. The old soldier seemed to his daughter the only thing steadfast in a rapidly changing world. Not his to reason why, his but to do, until he should die. All his life had been spent within this scheme of existence. In garrison at some foreign town, he had suddenly been told to pack his kit, embark, entrain, march, whatever the order might be. He had done so. His service completed, he had come home, donned his civilian clothes, married the Abigail girl of those days, and straightway come under her command. The little shop, a pint of beer, various boyish ways of passing the time, or even the passing of it in mere vacuity, with folded arms, an empty head, and a humorous or silent tongue, had become his daily lot. His children had been born, his wife had died. He had listened to various things that different people had said about these occurrences, but for him, the events were 'in Orders,' from some Commander remotely above just as those others events, that had moved him from England to India and back again, had been 'in Orders.' He had always done his duty, as little as possible, because it was just as wrong to do

more than you were ordered as it was to do less. An exact minimum of activity was the habit of the army. So long as he did that, paid the proper compliments to those in authority, what more could be asked of him? No sergeant-major, adjutant, colonel, not even God, a sort of invisible Brigadier, for whose benefit Church Parade, and the seventh day of the week were instituted, could find fault. Within this framework, he had been very fond of his wife, and her loss would have broken his heart had it not been part of 'Orders.' He was fond and proud of his girls, grateful to his sister-in-law who had done so much for their upbringing, respectful to the Rector, and got on well enough with most people. Those to whom he was under no obligation defined by something like a moral equivalent of King's Regulations, he treated humorously, as all old soldiers did.

Opposite him, Patsy sat staring at the fire. There was a great change in the girl had her father been capable of noticing it. In a very short while, her face and manner had rapidly matured. Shock and sorrow had hardened and defined her expression and even her features. But there was also a conscious dignity about the hands she folded, so that the ring Walter had brought her should be visible to herself, and she really didn't mind if it were visible to other people too. She seemed to hug herself a little, as if she were still feeling the presence of Walter's arm round her waist—his good arm, for the other was in a sling, as the result of the burns he had suffered, in helping to get out Philip Curtice's lifeless body from the *débris* of Perrin's workshop. To the silent pair of them, Violet entered.

'How's Aunt Rose?'

'Much the same. They reckon that it'll be a week or two yet before they can get her to Holgate.'

'Best not to hurry I suppose!'

'No, they say they mustn't hurry. Do you want any supper, Violet?'

'I could do with something!'

Patsy lifted two plates that lay one reversed upon another, on the hob.

'I thought you might!'

'Getting to be quite the little housekeeper, aren't you!'

But Patsy was not to be drawn, she just smiled. Fred Curell could not contain himself so well.

'Oor Rose' he mispronounced, through his absence of teeth

'Oo-ever—would—a thought—it. There must ha' been somethin' up between her and this Mr. Phil!' He grinned appreciatively.

'There, let the poor thing alone, Father!'

'I'm letting 'em alone!' protested he with a grin. ''At's more than he did t' me. He set light t' Flower Pot End!'

'Come, how do you know?'

Fred Curell treated his daughters to a broad wink that involved nearly the whole of his face.

'Things don't go on fire 'emselves!'

'Well, I never. What a thing to say!'

'Anyhow, Father, it's made more difference to the Rector than to you!' Violet spoke with decision. 'He won't get over it in a hurry. They say he's not coming back.'

'At'll be a pity. Nice Gen'leman! There y'are. Can't eggspec' tit. His own brother! I don't know what we shall do without 'im. I'm sure. Take a stall on the market?'

'That mightn't be a bad idea!' Violet agreed cautiously, sipping the tea Patsy had made her. The two girls nodded to each other. They were both thinking the same thing. For them, there was no future for the old town parish, the poor in Flower Pot End, the Rector in the old Rectory looking out into Church Alley. So long as these things continued they would not have made any move to alter them. But they both belonged to a newer generation, that looked beyond the circumstances in which they had grown up. While neither was philosopher enough to marvel that they, whose parents had moved into the town, because there was more company and better business in it, an advance in fact, should move out again, they both found it the natural thing to do. Violet's job, Patsy's home when Walter had served his time, even the shop itself did not depend any longer on the old family connection with the Curtices, the old sentiment of what had been a residential district that the shop had served. Their father was more ruminative.

'At's how things go' he grinned at them. 'You lie at one place. All—a—sudden—you get the order t' move on. This is the last o' Flower Pot End. We shall fetch up somewhere.'

THE END.

## CONVERSATION.

BY ADRIAN CONAN DOYLE.

THEY sat among the mossy roots, under the great oak, and the shadows and the lichen of that lordly trunk formed a mottled tapestry to the man's pale face and dreaming eyes, even as the amber of the falling leaves were as wind-blown locks from the ruffled hair of the girl who sat beside him. A robin, on a stunted holly bush, watched them with bright, wondering glance, a little patch of living red against the shining green of its jagged perch. Then the man coughed, horribly, raspingly, and the bird was gone, gone as a child of life which flees from the whisper of Death. The man wiped his lips with his handkerchief and the woman slipped her arm around his neck.

'Is it worse, my dear?' she whispered and her eyes were vague and staring, grey desperate eyes.

He took her hand in both of his.

'We've always faced things together,' he said, 'and I've loved and admired you for that dear courage which made you go on when it would have been so much easier to have slipped round our troubles. You know what I refer to. People talking, gossiping, sitting in judgment on our love.' He drew her closer to him. 'I saw the specialist to-day. Darling, you've got to be very brave. It won't—it won't be very long now.'

A low, shuddering sob broke from the girl's lips. No other sound but that fearful moan ceasing even as it was uttered. A leaf, floating from above, settled for a moment upon the curls of the bowed head and then wafted away upon a ripple of wind. And with the passing of that breeze, the woods were quiet, as though the noble trees were listening and the ferns pensive in thought. They sat silent for a moment, these two people, the man with his hand upon the woman's and his gaze staring out over the silent forest and on and on.

'How long?' Her pale lips seemed merely to shape the words.

'Six months at the most. It's best for you to know the truth, dearest.'

He lapsed once more into silence, but his eyes had started to

live again and were turned upon his companion, softly watching, adoring every little wayward tendril, worshipping the trembling mouth. She spoke abruptly, harshly, like one who has gagged her heart.

'When you go, Jack, I go too. You see, there will be nothing left.' She moved her hands vaguely like a child, then clung to the man in desperation—'You can't, you mustn't die. God wouldn't let you. You're all I've got. Everything! Everything!'—and buried her face against his chest. And as though in answer, slowly, terribly, he coughed, coughed until he panted for breath and her weeping head shook with the shuddering of his breast.

'Darling, darling,' he said, 'listen to me. Listen carefully, because you've got to remember every word. I'm only going ahead for a little while, such a little while, and then I'll wait for you and when you come, you'll find that I love you even more because you stuck it out and I'll take your hands in mine and I'll kiss them just like this'—he bent and pressed his lips on her fingers with infinite tenderness—'and then we'll go on together always, always.'

'Oh, Jack, if only I could believe that, if only I could know!'

'Dear one, look around you. See that little group of ferns on the bark of that old tree, look how sweetly the green of the moss fades into the golden bracken. And now lift your eyes and gaze down those aisles of great trunks, so silent and dim and majestic. There is your answer to life, to love, darling. What a magnificent jester the Almighty would be if He gave us the gift to adore and learn from His creations, only to extinguish our souls which we had built up from Him.'

'Come, look into my eyes. Look deep.' His voice was low, vibrant. 'I swear to you in Christ's name that I'll wait. By His love that I'll wait. But you, in turn, must swear that you will leave that hour—to Destiny.'

She gazed silently into his eyes and, as she looked, her face became natural once again, her rigid form relaxed and a low sigh crept from her lips like one who has watched beyond the hills.

'I promise you, my own man. I saw then, suddenly, so suddenly, that we can never be really apart. I seemed to look right into your Soul and I saw my own mirrored there. When you have—when you have gone ahead, I'll come and walk in this dear wood and talk to you. You'll hear me, won't you?'

'Yes, my dear, I'll hear you,' the man answered, 'and now, as



God must have been very close to us during these last few minutes, let us give Him just a wee word of thanks each in our own way. I'm afraid that I'm not a great hand on prayers, but I'd feel easier if we just said "Thank you" before we go home.' And so, side by side, they knelt upon the moss, this pale, coughing man and the fair-haired girl and the only sound was the rustling and the whispering of the falling leaves.

'It's getting late,' said the man, rising from his knees and shivering slightly. The woman had risen with him.

'Put your scarf on, darling, you'll be warmer. There! That's better.' She adjusted it with quick, loving touches around his throat. He coughed again and she winced as from a blow. 'There now. Let's go home.' And, linking her arm in his, they wandered away down the long aisle, under the leafy branches deepening in shadow.

And the robin, fluttering back to the holly bush, watched, with bright little eyes, the flattened grass beneath the oak tree straighten blade by blade.

#### *A THOUGHT UPON THE FROSTS IN MAY.*

How golden is the fruit that ripens now,—

Survivor of that massacre in Spring,  
When winter drew her sword upon the bough,  
And slew those innocents, still slumbering.

As precious now to me are these new days,

Which now I pluck from what I thought were lost,  
Since sweetest is the Love that Love delays,  
Sweetest the fruit that has escaped Love's frost.

A. D. WALMSLEY.

## THE PACT.

BY MRS. ALYN WILLIAMS.

It seems strange now, in the light of sinister developments, that the couple should ever have appeared as merely negligible and commonplace. There was to my youthful appraisal something even slightly ridiculous in their middle-aged subterfuges, in Mr. Mildmay's barely disguised baldness and his roving eyes behind the entrenchment of gold eyeglasses. Mrs. Mildmay had the suggestion of one of Rossetti's full-lipped, yearning maidens grown elderly, with tendencies to stoutness, hair dye and velvet throat bands. In both there was the assumption of an up-to-dateness and a determined gaiety.

For these characteristics I had been prepared by the letters which, during the winter, had come to us in London from the little East Sussex town where Anne and I still own an old house and garden. Now that there were only two of us left, two girls earning our own living, Anne as publisher's reader and I as magazine illustrator, that was our summer haven of rest, to be worked for and looked forward to from December until July. During what was considered by our relatives as an enforced exile from an hereditary Eden, they sought to console us by letters full of local news in which the Mildmays had recently figured.

Like the splash of a pebble in a wash-basin, the advent of this middle-aged couple had been a notable event. Before Christmas, Aunt Lethbridge in her Italianate handwriting—as erect and undeviating as herself—had written :

'We have had a delightful accession to our social life. A wealthy couple, a Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay, have come here to reside. At present they are in lodgings pending alterations to Vivian House, of which they take possession in the autumn. They brought letters of introduction from your cousin Hilda Kenyon at Montreux, where they have been living for some years past. It seems they have a place on the South Downs somewhere near Lewes, but after their return they found it too lonely and I gathered there were unpleasant associations. We find them great acquisitions. Anne will find Mr. Mildmay congenial as he has been a writer ; I seem to remem-

ber his name years ago in magazines. She is interesting, artistic and has been a beauty. She is an unusually good Bridge player and we have games almost every evening.'

Janet Lethbridge's enthusiasm—in letters to Anne—was more tempered :

'Why—oh why—if people do come to our Cranford can't they be young and gay? Mamma and all the old ladies are rejoicing over the Mildmays—who might be worse. He would like to play golf and be rather skittish but—for all her "sweetness and light" she dominates, always has the middle of the stage, with her talk about art and her perpetual smile. When she first came we all used to sit around and look conscious of the Italian Renaissance, but it is a relief to find she is really more interested in Bridge and old furniture for her new house.'

Thus I recognised them at once when one morning, soon after our return, they stopped at the front gate to admire my roses. As I was weeding a flower-bed it was quite natural to come forward and effect a mutual introduction. It was rather a *tête-à-tête*, for Mr. Mildmay was silenced by the lady's dominating note—admiration of roses, old houses and gardens. It is not the custom in our town to make calls in the morning, but these strangers had such an alien air of discursive leisure that it ended in my inviting them indoors to see the panelled dining-room. Also from the first I was consciously impelled by that unwilling curiosity which is a sub-conscious warning. Disliking her vocal mannerisms, her insistent graciousness, I seemed to recognise her as having been the central figure of some emotional drama, as one of those battered heroines who should never have survived the end of their romances. What she still retained and subtly managed to impart, was the sense of her importance, of her personality, somewhat blunted, as if she were consciously subduing her obsolete allurements; tricks of hands, of faded sunken brown eyes. Her sonorous enthusiasms focused on our heirlooms, warming-pans, Toby jugs. As collectors of old china we met on common ground.

'I have a teapot that would interest you, with that lovely purple lustre like the bloom on a plum'—she spoke slowly, giving each word more than its full value, enhanced by a mysterious tight-lipped smile—'but it is with so many of our things, locked up in our house in the country. Alfred dear, we must take a motor some day soon and go there to collect some of our possessions.' Then, as if she

found it necessary to explain his evident surprise, she added : ' You see, we hardly ever go there now. We left the house years ago in the care of an old cousin, as caretaker. After the War when we returned we tried to live there, but it is too lonely, too many sad associations. Perhaps I sense these deeper impressions—psychic intimations—more than most people, but for a day with a gay party—young people like you and your sister—it would be different. We feel we know you both through your cousin, dear Mrs. Kenyon.'

That was the beginning of our acquaintance with the couple. Later we were thrown with them constantly. They were part of the small orbit on which we moved. If we went to Aunt Lethbridge's for tea they were there or they dropped in after dinner for a game of Bridge, at which Anne, herself a devotee, made the fourth. In this way it was she who saw the most of them and who—despite the difference in their ages—became their friend. She thought Mrs. Mildmay 'fascinating,' and she and Mr. Mildmay had long conversations about books and Victorian literature. She thought I was prejudiced in my distaste for this affable person whose perpetual grin disclosed preposterously perfect teeth. Janet Lethbridge and I were the two dissenters in an admiring circle. Janet called Mrs. Mildmay 'the imitation Mona Lisa.' She was not beautiful—to my mind she could never have been so—with her blunt nose and small eyes, but she had that quality of personality built upon an ego determined upon admiration, gaining in power through each subject to its will. She was not clever, but she had mastered the technique of cleverness, the catchwords of art and literature so that most people saw her as intellectual. The strange thing was that—whenever we were together—she so held my interest, that I should be always seeking beneath the factitious exterior for a clue in some possible past experience or environment, which might explain the elaborate mechanism of her artifice. Insensibly I found myself never accepting her obvious action save as involving some hidden motive.

Thus, I was not surprised when, on the morning of our excursion, the motor-car called for us with Aunt Lethbridge seated beside Mr. Mildmay instead of our hostess, and we were told that 'Suzanne was suffering from one of her severe headaches.' Automatically my mind had registered that look of incredulity on her husband's face. For some reason, she had never meant to go—she avoided the place.

Why, it was difficult to imagine, for a lovelier spot it would be hard to find. Anne's eyes and mine signalled that to each other. After motoring a few miles out of Lewes on the high road, the car turned aside from the fields of wheat and climbed upward on a sunken and shaded chalk road to a little depression in the hills where, nestling in the last grove of trees, stood a small house. Beyond and above this grove arose the barren grassy stretch of the Downs. Below, on the lower slope were fertile fields, ploughed land and meadows where herds of black and white cattle grazed. A little hamlet, with pointed spire of a hidden church, and red tiled or thatched roofs, was one of many such hamlets and farm-houses hidden by the ridges of misted woodland that stretched out for thirty miles, fading into the distance. Square, about eighty years old, built of broken flints and mortar, with a roof of old red tiles from some older building, it had escaped the hideousness of its period by being welded to the earth by ivy and low shrubs. Nestling in this little depression, with its garden of hardy roses in bloom, it achieved that rare and essential architectural quality of seeming indigenous to its environment. In the glow of a July afternoon with its unshuttered curtained windows it had even an air gay yet tranquil, which extended to its interior. The large living and dining room into which we entered opened with french windows on a brick-paved loggia. On the east side was a long casement window and window-seat where we saw a curve of the bare hill. The room with its wide bricked fireplace, rafted ceiling, Jacobean tables and chairs was not slavishly a period reproduction. There were big easy chairs and a piano, books in the bookcases, paintings and etchings on the walls. Fully furnished, bright with chintz hangings and flowered wall-paper in the bedrooms, there was not the feeling of emptiness that usually hangs around deserted houses. I had rather the impression of a momentary lull as if the tenants had gone away for a few weeks' vacation.

Mr. Mildmay in the large room, carefully gleaning from the mantel the lustre teapot, brass candlesticks and other articles adequately antique, explained this quality of suspended rather than extinct animation. The house had been for years occupied by an elderly cousin, a Miss Jessup, who had gone to live at Eastbourne. Since her departure in the autumn it had been in the charge of a couple named Hobbs who lived on the top of the Downs, who had orders to keep the place attractive for a possible purchaser.

'We hope to sell it. To tell you the truth'—his candour

seemed curiously impelled, a relief—'my wife will never come back here to live. Too many sad memories of the friend who lived here with us—so talented—a tragedy'; his voice dropped, hastily and lightly resumed, 'There is not much chance of its being sold this summer. If you and your sister would like to take it on in August for a few months' change, you could have it for a nominal price.'

Anne and I, being not only sisters but also good chums, have the habit of acting in accord. We both smiled and shook our heads, but I knew that the suggestion dwelt in her mind as it did in mine. Later on, we began to speak of it as a possibility when the summer holidays brought charrs-à-bancs full of sightseers to invade our historic village. They spoilt our restful seclusion by demands for flowers, to be served with tea, by the tooting of horns and inane songs on lovely nights. It was the culmination of these nuisances that drove us, the first of August, to letting our own house and taking refuge in the country quiet of the Mildmay's house, still unsold, which was ceded to us by the couple for an absurd rental and with a curious relief at our occupation.

There, for two months, we found the isolation we sought. In that dip of the hills we settled into a peaceful routine of work. Anne chose for her papers the big desk with drawers which stood in front of the french doors in the large room. Sitting there she could see across the loggia and the garden, the small thatched building, half-hidden by apple-trees that bore no fruit, which I had found, to my delight, to be a properly equipped studio with a skylight. True, Mr. Mildmay had said 'Make use of the studio,' but the words had made little impression until, in exploring the day after our arrival, I came across the little house and found that one of the keys upon my bunch fitted the lock.

The room with its one drawn blind, had evidently not been opened for years. In the cold upper light the dust lay thick on the floor, the easel, the fencing masks and rapiers on the dark walls and the long linen smock which hung by a nail on the door. Oil paintings, or rather sketches, were stacked around the walls all signed S.E. in one corner; half-finished, with a bold, vivid technique which always seemed to flag before completion. One fancied them a morning's work, put aside after a few hours of intense energy which on the morrow would be expended on another attempt. They were rapid characterisations of local models and scenes. A few were portrait sketches of Mr. Mildmay, not then



bald, but always prim, definite and precise, but most of them—and the best—though unfinished, as if the aim were impossible perfection, were different poses of Mrs. Mildmay. It was obvious that this was what she had been as a young woman—at least in the eyes of one man—wistfully lovely, full-lipped, dreamy-eyed, with masses of dark hair. And now!

As I worked there in the mornings, I would wonder about S.E., who had once sat on the same stool, before the same easel. Was he the friend with whom there were such 'sad memories,' so vaguely alluded to as 'so talented, a tragedy'? Neither Anne nor I could recall more.

At first in the afternoons we wandered down the sunken road to the village and post office, but as the spell of the place grew upon us we were content to remain within our own small domain, our grass plot from which we looked down on the valley. Sometimes we climbed the Downs that rose so steeply at the rear, by a trail with chalk steps worn by innumerable feet, to a small hill farm and cottage inhabited by the couple named Hobbs, who had been caretakers for the Mildmays. They and their three children were so tanned and weather-hardened that we called them the Hickory Hobbs. Every morning milk and vegetables were brought by either Hobbs or his boys, and once a week Mrs. Hobbs came and cleaned and baked for us. At first they were all equally silent, with the shyness of wild things on the Downs, the rabbits that scuttled across our paths. By degrees, as Mrs. Hobbs became used to us and to our ways, she imparted various facts and information as spontaneous as a bird's song, so that bit by bit there was built up for us some of the life of the Mildmays in this place.

It began with her excuses for not adequately cleaning the studio:

'There's a queer feeling there, mum. Some say as 'ow it is 'aunted by the gentleman who owned the place, that they used to live with—Mr. H'elverson.'

'The one that died?'

'E didn't just die, mum, 'e shot 'isself there by the chalk pit one evening. A fine 'ansome man 'e was too—and so fond of Madam, Mrs. Mildmay, and the three of them living together so long and so friendly, with their writing and singing and painting pictures, that folks 'ardly knew which was 'er 'usband. There was some talk about it—I never paid much attention. 'E was the one with the money. Seems like 'e and Mr. Mildmay was at college together. Anyway, 'e shot hisself for some reason and 'e

left the place and 'is life insurance and all 'is money to 'er—not to 'im. They never lived 'ere long after that. A pleasant gentleman 'e was, easy spoken. Blowed 'is brains out. People say 'e walks.' 'Walks?'

'Just wanders around, uneasy like. Jimmy 'owell saw 'im once—coming down the 'ill, 'e was, in the dusk. 'E looked life-like and like 'e wanted to speak, but Jimmy was that scared 'e fell on the grass and 'id 'is heyes.'

Anne laughed when she told me this.

'Jimmy took too much beer at the Half Moon' was her comment. But for me something like a faint shadow came over the place and I instinctively began to avoid the loneliness and the associations of the studio. I did not want to think too much about the dead artist and his secret tragedy.

The summer was unusually fine. In our long walks Anne and I, because we were interested in psychology and had no neighbours to discuss, sometimes speculated about the Mildmays. Anne saw it as perfectly natural that two friends should live together with the wife of one of them to keep house, and that Sidney Elverson should leave his money to ensure the future of the woman whose charming companionship had made their home-life more comfortable. For my part, recalling certain tricks of voice and gesture, potent with the assurance of charm, I could not visualise the Mrs. Mildmay of this *ménage à trois* as the domesticated wife.

But we had many other interests and occupations in the lovely summer days, the simple housekeeping, our work and gardening. The flower-beds since Miss Jessup's departure had gone to seed, but some of the hardier plants had survived and it was my labour of love to give them clear soil and breathing space. They rewarded me, dear things, by unexpected and surprising blooms—here and there a purple lupin or a scarlet poppy or hollyhock.

The summer of warmth and sunshine passed all too quickly and uneventfully, in the cheerful routine which Anne seems to bring with her. Early in September a change came. Anne's firm of publishers wrote her from London that there was a glut of material waiting to be read. We intended to remain until the middle of October, so Anne decided to go to Town, remain a week, weeding out the MSS. and then to return with the best of the lot for more careful consideration. She hesitated, however, about leaving me alone, although I urged that the solitude to which she objected was rather welcome as an opportunity for study. After strenuously

combating her wish that I should have a friend to stay with me we compromised upon the partial presence of Edie, the eldest Hobbs girl, aged fifteen. She was not company or defence, but she washed dishes and went to the store and post office. Silent enough with me, she must have yearned for society, for every evening after supper, she climbed the steep path to her home, returning at bedtime.

Anne left by the morning train. I had intended and expected to work, but that afternoon I felt unable to do anything save wander around restlessly between house and garden. Sitting aimlessly in the loggia, I watched the steep hill back of the studio, so precipitate as to cast downward sharp shadows of the gorse bushes. Vast cloud forms rolled up from the sea, masses of drifting vapour from behind the Downs, darkening the barren slopes indented with huge and mysterious impressions as if Titans had lain and left their impress on the young and plastic earth. The day seemed strangely empty, the house and place incredibly inert and different, as if awaiting the coming of another phase to manifest their true significance. It was as if the guise they had hitherto assumed had been borrowed from Anne's cheerful domesticity. A bright-coloured veil or surface was being slowly withdrawn revealing a more permanent and underlying reality belonging to its sombre past. I remembered what William Blake had written: '*Man passes on but states forever remain. He passes through them like a traveller.*'

Something of this sense of change was due to the weather, for the golden summer passed suddenly and was succeeded by dull skies and a bitter wind. Awakening early in the mornings with full intention to busy myself with my pencil and drawing-board there came upon me, as the day progressed, a dreamy reverie, wonder and retrospection as to the lives of the three people who had lived here so long together. The consciousness with which I entered was one that for many years had been garnered and existent in this shell of their daily routine, emotions and passions. Miss Jessup's had been a colourless personality, my own seemed to sink into abeyance, submerged in their ways and days.

The sombre afternoons and long twilights passed without note, in the absorbing obsession of reconstructing from slight clues the drama enacted in these same rooms, the eternal triangle of one woman and two men. Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay no longer were, for me, the middle-aged couple that I knew. They were younger, like

the drawings in the studio, Mr. Mildmay finicky, ineffectually dabbling at literature, half-supported by his richer friend, equally dilettante, dabbling at art.

In this house which seemed to have been vacated hurriedly, there were many witnesses to their habits and preoccupations; Mr. Mildmay's volumes of reference, biography and essays, books of poetry, with Sidney Elverson's book plate, passionate verses interlining his marginal notes; dates, their initials S<sup>M</sup><sub>E</sub>. Internal

evidence, clear enough! One wondered if the husband had ever seen them and what he thought.

In the intimacy of their isolated existence she had played the not unusual rôle of a commonplace woman, invested—because of their adoration—with a mysterious and artificial allure. She had been in her thirties, graceful, indolent, with a certain looseness and vagueness of will and character, sympathising with their pursuits, her husband's writing, his friend's painting. The music in the rack was hers, her writing was on the cover: not the plain Susan she had probably been christened, but Suzanne, a name as carefully meretricious as her character. One imagined her singing the sentimental songs in a throaty contralto to the two men: her husband and his friend who had secretly loved her and whose love I felt sure she had passively accepted as a tribute to her vanity.

It was that friend, Sidney Elverson, who held for me the deepest interest. Though long dead, he was for me the most real and vivid of the trio. The other two whom I had seen and did not trust, were shadowy, elusive in their shallow superficialities. But with that shadowy third I had a deep subconscious sympathy, based on the same taste in literature—Fiona MacCleod, Poe, Walter Pater. In a volume of that little known and unappreciated poet Philip Bourke Marston, he had underscored these lines:

‘Must it not be that one dwelling here  
Where one man and his sorrows dwelt so long  
Shall feel the pressure of a ghostly throng?’

His own sorrows had been such that their burden had led to suicide. What could they have been save the passion for an Egeria of his own creation, who was the wife of his best friend; and the ties of honour and duty that held them apart? He had, by the evidence of his own scribbled notes in books, possessed both wit and humour.

A delightful person if one could only have known him as he was at the age of thirty-five, at the end of those fateful years.

In the long twilights, when alone, I would try to visualise his presence in that house. As to his appearance, I had no clue, for there was no possible self-portrait among those in the studio. Of the life he had lived and so desperately taken, nothing remained save those sketches, those brief lines of annotations and the intangible and brooding spell of tragedy.

Then, gradually I began to be conscious in one part of the large room, where the writing-table stood before the long glass doors, of a scent, at first so faint that it was like a memory, the pleasant acrid tang of tobacco smoke. In the mornings and afternoons it was barely perceptible, but each evening about sunset it seemed to be stronger so that there grew upon me a definite sequence, a thread of associations: the gloaming hour, an odour of a pipe, and the impression of his personality.

The evening that brought the culmination of this experience and mood came at the end of a sombre afternoon. A dull even sky hung all day over the dun and colourless fields and misted distance. A day grey and sunless and windless. Edie Hobbs had climbed to her hill home and the twilight held for me more than its usual loneliness. I sat on the casement window-seat facing the long room, keenly aware of the aroma of a pipe. As I watched, through the long glass doors, the flicker of swallows' wings as they dipped and wheeled against the green shrubbery, I saw or discerned between them and me, seated at the long table, the form of a man. I say form, because at first it was only an outlined form, a condensation of darker particles which gradually assumed substance and definition. Strangely enough, I had no fear. It seemed a natural process like an experiment in chemistry, or the changes in a cloud, to see the details come into view; the slender form in the corduroy coat, the fine head with the crisp dark curls and pointed beard, reminiscent of Charles the First. There was an air of graceful weariness in the pose which must have been habitual: head resting on his right hand, elbow on the table, almost silhouetted against the twilight.

From the first I seemed to know what it was, who it was. I said to myself, 'Why, this is Sidney Elverson.'

I was not afraid, simply because he was the most charming person that I had ever seen. I waited, reluctant to see him dis-

appear. He stooped as if to open one of the lower drawers of the table, then arose.

As he turned I had a clearer view of his face, so strangely vital in its expression, half-quizzical, half-imploring. His manner and movement had in it something puppet-like, as of an action often repeated, his glance no recognition of me as an individual.

There could come to me no harm from this figure so handsome, so mournful. It was only automatic, semi-conscious. He moved towards the open half of the french doors—and was gone.

I stepped out on the bricks of the loggia. In the dusk of the garden there was no deeper shade, no movement of life save the downward dip of swallows' wings. There came over me the most profound sadness and sense of loss, because he was only a simulacrum, because he was dead and I could never again see him or know him or hear his voice.

The next day brought Anne with her gossip of London and current topics. Under the influence of her gay practicality existence became normal. I could not tell her of, or expose to her incredulity, the experience which sometimes seemed to me a waking dream, faded like the aroma of the pipe, the appealing phantom. What disturbed me, besides the sense of regret as for some lost possibility, was the meaning of the appearance, and another question. What storage or magnetism of emotions was concentrated upon that ordinary piece of furniture? Anne, conscious only of its convenience, worked there constantly, using the deep side drawers as receptacles for the MSS. which she had brought back and which I frequently read aloud to her.

Thus, we were quite oblivious of the Mildmays and their morbid problems, when the clue came unexpectedly one morning while Anne lounged before the open fire and we were both absorbed in the manuscript of a picaresque sort of eighteenth-century romance. Having finished the last page of the section in my hand I brought out of the lower drawer another instalment of loose sheets, and began to read from the top page.

'Shall I read this?' I asked. 'It is not typed like the rest and there is no number on it.'

'Go on,' said Anne. 'It is an oversight of the typist and we can find out where it belongs in the book.'

The script—quite clear in the beginning, ended in a trail—broken sentences and erased words:

'I rushed from you this afternoon overcome by the thought



that in a few hours those beloved eyes—your dear voice would, like my own, be stilled for ever. For the act—the horror has gone since we will go out together. Now that you have offered to follow me—where? Any escape is better than this living lie—this treachery to him or living apart—The way I have chosen for you will be without pain—It will seem quite natural that, grieved at the accidental shooting of a friend, you should, after sleepless nights, take a wrong powder by mistake instead of veronal—I leave directions on another sheet of paper—All that I have is willed to you—in this way he will inherit and be free from financial—this sounds callous but it seems to help towards restitution of the wrong—I cannot Suzanne write or trust myself to say these things in your presence—this will be the last word from me until—'

The scrawl broke off abruptly. As I read the words there came to me the old spell of tragedy which must have showed in my voice.

'Hold on,' said Anne. 'That's a letter to Mrs. Mildmay.'

'From Sidney Elverson who killed himself—don't you see what it means?'

'Of course—the poor crazy fellow fancied himself that she was in love with him and that she had promised to kill herself.'

I said nothing. Anne's inveterate incredulity to all that she termed abnormal would always seize upon the simplest solution and rest there—content.

By tacit agreement we did not even discuss the letter and whether it was to be returned to Mrs. Mildmay.

To me its hideous testimony was clear. I knew Sidney Elverson as that tortured being, a passionate puritan—adventurer in imagination, puppet in action—controlled by ancestral wires: custom, honour. Torn between his infatuation and his duty to his friend, he had chosen to end it all. She had promised to die soon afterwards and had not done so—either from cowardice or design. Having been mysteriously steeped in the strata of their consciousness I was convinced that her quiescence was premeditated. It had been an easy plot: simply to do nothing—merely to break a contract by which a dead man had been lured to his doom. Without compromising action she had released herself from an embarrassing and despairing lover and at the same time fallen heir to his wealth. Had she, after reading his message, sat at the desk and waited for the hour for the fatal shot, until she knew that his body lay in the gloom of the chalk pit?

I never saw that fragment of paper again. My impression is that Anne destroyed it sooner than open any unpleasant issue or revive painful memories. She always liked and defended Mrs. Mildmay.

To me the woman was atrocious, even in the cheerful Victorian environment of Aunt Lethbridge's drawing-room where we next met.

She was seated at the card table, one of a rubber of whist, when we entered the room. As she turned to greet us it was with a shock that I missed the wistful, tress-crowned face of the studio sketches. This heavy-bodied creature with dulled eyes and dyed hair was a walking tomb of what had been.

'So glad you liked our little place.' Her voice was cloying, her smile mechanical. 'For us it has too many sad associations—of a brilliant and unfortunate young friend—— Dear Mrs. Lethbridge, clubs are trumps.'

I realised that the inexplicable thing had come to pass. She had deceived the man who loved her. From either cowardice or treachery she had lured him to his death—and she had forgotten it.

Far more real to her than the ghastly episode in which had figured that young woman who had been herself, was the social routine of her afternoon Bridge club, her little group with their emulation and distribution of prizes.

To me she was far more horrible, more dead than that charming wraith—poor betrayed, impotent ghost!—the survival of intense and tragic emotions.

Now that we have sold our old house we see the Mildmays very seldom and I am glad—in view of what I know about her and what I can never know.

*SWEET POTATOES.*

BY LEWIS LETT.

SUNDAY. A day to be dreaded.

There would be no work on the plantation, and no sound or movement to detract from the sense of isolation.

But even on Sunday it was good when sunrise, dispelling the clouds of mosquitoes which had whined viciously round the net all night, made it practicable to leave the stretcher-bed and breathe the fresher air outside.

A glance at the calendar hung on a nail by one of the doors showed the date to be the twenty-fourth of September. Two hundred and twenty-eight days since the last consignment of stores had been delivered at the mouth of the creek and there had been speech with a white man. Invoices had arrived with exemplary promptitude in the mail forwarded by native messenger from the mission, twenty miles away; but none of the small boats on the coast had found it worth while to call in the river to discharge a couple of tons or so of stores and pick up the rapidly deteriorating copra for shipment to Port Moresby.

Certainly, on Sunday, one might dally over the early cup of tea, and note again the first rays of sunlight gilding the tops of the jungle trees, four hundred yards away across the clearing. Curious how black the trunks looked in shadow, and how they sprang into colour, green, brown and grey, as the golden light swept downwards; and how featureless the mist-covered ground with its cloak of sweet potato vines, the young coco-nut palms barely noticeable in the field of cloudy green.

To the left, thin spirals of smoke from yesterday's fires still rose grey against the jungle, to vanish against the pale, hard blue of the sky. A few birds were calling in the cool shadows, but the rich chorus of dawn had died down, and soon the sun's heat would silence the most persistent.

Ten minutes of exercises and a cold shower-bath gave a feeling of vigour and an appetite capable of facing the fried sweet potatoes and tea dumped on the table by the scantily clad chef. Not the most tempting of morning meals perhaps; but with no other form of food

available, the least monotonous arrangement was to fry them for breakfast, boil them whole for lunch and mash them for the evening meal. Iara's culinary methods could be relied upon to provide variety. Since there was no fat available, the two frying-pans had been burned through long ago. He now used the blade of a shovel; and was placidly confident that the unwieldy instrument was to blame for leaving part of the breakfast dainty half-raw, while part was burned to black brittleness.

Even the prosaic process of boiling was embellished by his artistic disdain of set rules. Occasionally the dreadful tubers were dropped into boiling water half an hour before serving. More often they were slowly stewed for four or five hours and served cold. And between these extremes his art found and exploited infinite gradations of nastiness.

There were a score of axes to be ground in readiness for the next day's work. Two of them needed new handles; and an hour had gone by before they were all satisfactorily dealt with. A heavy sigh from Peter, followed by a yawn and a stretch, hinted at a walk and could not be denied. His stumpy tail wagged joyously as he watched the familiar process of taking hat and stick from the corner table in the one-roomed house; and his manner as he jumped from the verandah and stood barking his impatience said plainly, 'Oh, come on. Why bother about steps?'

He led the way eagerly down through the plot of grass to the log which spanned the little creek, and across it; then along the narrow pad which led through potato vines and young palms to the native quarters. All was in order. The quarter-acre of bare ground was swept clean; the house was quite reasonably neat; blankets and sleeping-mats were hung out to air on the verandah. The accumulation of wood-ash in the cook-house was not unduly heavy; and plates and pannikins were clean, and ranged on the racks to dry.

Nothing to be done there. Peter, disgusted, abandoned his search for meat, of which he had had none since cartridges gave out some months ago, and again led the way up the fifty-chains' length of the clearing, past the creek-crossing and on to the bare patch at the far end, where stacked fires were disposing of the last of the timber on the hundred-acre block. The huge *Ficus* still stretched its ugly length along the ground; but the fires heaped round it had reduced the height of its enormous butt to about fifteen feet. In two places the unwieldy trunk was burned through; but on the

unburned parts colonies of the tiny, brown bush-bees were busily loading themselves with its glutinous white sap.

Most of the fires had burned well, though one or two heaps had collapsed and would have to be re-stacked. Many of the logs were far too heavy to be moved single-handed; but it was possible to replace others under penalty of a thick coating of wood-ash, black and grey. Peter strongly disapproved; and it was his air of boredom as much as anything that, after an hour or two, prompted a return to the house for a clean-up before lunch.

Hunger prompted an overhaul of the store-room in the vain hope of finding something to mitigate the revolting sameness of a sweet potato diet. But the narrow space partitioned off at one end of the large room was unpromisingly bare. One tin of tea stood magnificently on the long shelf, flanked by two tins of sardines. Sardines and sweet potatoes? The suggestion died in a shudder. A dozen tins of treacle and a very doubtful packet of pepper completed the stock; and the most meticulous search failed to disclose even a few spilled grains of salt; and there was singularly little consolation in the thought that in many countries sweet potatoes would be considered a luxury.

But they were not quite so bad as usual. Iara, returning late from his Sunday-morning leave, had not had time to reduce them to the usual unhappy pulp; and Peter disposed of his share with some signs of appreciation.

The morning had gone well, but there was still the afternoon. What was to be done?

The bookshelf, nailed up against the pithy palm wall, contained only the remnants of a small library which had suffered direly from silverfish and white ants. Noyes's *Drake* was there, but too resonant with the diapason of sea and storm; too graphic of open spaces and wild free winds to be any other than tantalising in that small, box-shaped hole in the jungle. *Sartor Resartus* held a humour and phraseology too ponderous; Milton too strong a stimulus to the imagination. The *Bab Ballads* were too frivolous; Tennyson too poignantly English; and each of a dozen novels too trivial. In any case, one did not want to read.

There were letters that might be written; but an hour spent pen in hand brought conviction that there was nothing to write about. Nobody wants to read descriptions of scenery; the daily round could not possibly assume any interest; natives had been the subject of so many letters that there was nothing left to be said about them.

So in the end one just sat and mused, permitting memories and fancies to flit haphazard.

Memories were varied enough. Lincolnshire villages where violets and primroses followed anemones and snowdrops in incredible profusion, and beech-trees transformed their summer shade into an autumn pageant of gold and brown flame; while winter days offered a choice between wheels and sled-runners on the snow-covered roads. Industrial towns in Yorkshire, with a pall of smoke hanging perennially over the smoke-blackened streets and where, four times a day, the air was rent by the shriek of factory sirens. School and school-mates; summer rambles in scented lanes and fields, and the incompatibility of 'spotted dog' with efficient training for house-matches. London, with its peculiar, lovable smell and the muffled roar of horse-drawn traffic. The sea, blue and scintillating like silk in lamp-light, or leaden-grey, storm-driven; huge racing hills of water hounding down and half-submerging the labouring tramps that braved it. Bombay, Sydney, Santos, Montreal, Yokohama, Odessa, Rangoon and a score more. Ghastly months in a London office, where one felt and thought like a machine. Cycle tours through the summer glories of Kent, Surrey, Buckinghamshire; autumn walks on the Yorkshire moors and the hills of the northern counties.

Twelve thousand miles away pretty girls, frank and fresh in linens and muslins, still talked and laughed musically as they sat in the shade of giant elms or beeches: old lawns, softly resilient underfoot, still shone pearly green under last night's dew; there was music; music in concert halls, in cathedrals, in well-ordered homes. There were crowds in the streets of London; theatre crowds, crowds of business men; crowding traffic about the Mansion House and in Piccadilly. The River Wharfe still swirled, brown and sparkling about the stepping-stones at Bolton Abbey; and the North Foreland lights flashed their steady warning and guidance across the wind-whipped straits—twelve thousand miles away.

But vacant musing was of little profit, and could only lead to the enervation of nostalgia. The future, surely, offered a field for constructive thought. In spite of the drab monotony of days which followed days exactly similar, there was progress. This hundred-acre block would be planted up within the month, and land must be secured for extension. If only a Government officer would call and buy from the natives the area on the main river already applied for. The application had gone in early in February, and it was now mid-September.



Splendid to see the big stream flowing steadily past and round the long bend to south and west; to have something moving always in sight to replace the ruthless immobility of these forest walls: a sliding flood of water, four hundred yards wide, which would reflect the colours of the sunset sky, and on which one could see daily at least a canoe passing up or down as proof that an outside world does exist and is populated. There would be a better chance of trade too, to help eke out precarious finances until the planted palms produced their crop.

Hopes of a satisfactory volume of trade with these local natives were non-existent. Relations with them were smooth enough now that Moro was undergoing a two-years' sentence for burglary, and the derision following the failure of Dorma's sorcerous ambitions had driven him from the district. But there seemed no desire for trade, and no means of creating a demand for anything beyond a small supply of tobacco. It was not even possible, without great effort, to maintain a supply of foods for the native labourers.

The sun was sinking towards the tree-tops. Time for a stroll; though Peter, when consulted, did not seem enthusiastic. He showed some germs of interest as we entered the jungle behind the house and strolled towards the nearest village. Perennial hopes of meat sent him nosing eagerly among the undergrowth in search of a rat or some other succulent trifle. But after finding a nest of very active bush-wasps he gave it up in disgust and kept dolefully to heel, tail down and ears back.

A mile up the smooth track and back again through fading light. Birds were vocal again, and above the lighter chorus came the deep boom of blue-pigeons, the harsh cry of the male Goura and even the raucous note of the scrub turkey; all excellent table-birds which seemed to gather boldness from the knowledge that there were no cartridges to be feared, but as songsters grotesquely inadequate. Pity one could not import a few thrushes, larks and blackbirds to teach them the simple perfection of song.

Smoke was rising from the kitchen fire. Presumably Iara was racking his inventive brain for some new indignity to inflict on those unpleasant vegetables; and the result must be tackled while daylight lasted. It was possible to vary the uninspiring fare by adding treacle to the potatoes; and there was always the insoluble problem as to whether they were nastier with or without the sticky mess.

There was still a glimmer of daylight remaining when the

nauseous mash had been disposed of, but the lamp might as well be lighted. Iara brought a glowing stick from the kitchen fire, blew it to a flame and applied it to the wick of teased-out cotton which floated on a cork in a bath of coco-nut oil. It spluttered a good deal and smelt of rancid copra ; but at least it gave a suggestion of light, and would serve until a new supply of kerosene arrived.

But the rough walls lent themselves too readily to moving shadows, and the room appeared even more squalid by its wavering light than during the day. Better to sit on the verandah since reading and writing were impossible. It would be nice to have a floor of sawn timber to replace these rounded palm-slats. Certainly there was an advantage in the ease with which one could drop tobacco ash and other rubbish through the cracks, to be cleared up later by the house-boy : but the springy palm split when nails were driven through it, and the nail-heads caught one's shoes exasperatingly : nor would chairs stand steadily on its uneven surface.

Queer stuff, this trade tobacco : impossibly sticky in a pipe, and almost flavourless when made into cigarettes with scraps of newspaper, though it left a strong after-taste, and the rank smell of it was penetrating and persistent. But at least it was better than the used tea-leaves, dried in the sun, to which one had been driven on tramp steamers years ago.

The western sky was full of colour, and the uneven line of tree-tops stood clearly defined against a glow of carmine shot with orange. Always in this light the massed ranks of trees seemed to brood, aloof and sullen. The deep shadow below the pageant of colour held a threat akin to that of Papua's mountain ranges seen from the sea ; where peak is piled on jagged peak, precipitous ridge on ridge in a sinister purple haze, proudly repellent, savagely morose and forbidding ; seeming to throw out a contemptuous challenge to the irreverent. Papua had been crossed on foot from sea to sea ; its highest peaks had been scaled and many of its torrential streams traced to their sources ; and here, in this small clearing, was proof that the gloomy jungle could be destroyed and its soil made to serve the white man's needs. Yet the challenging threat persisted, as though the spirit of Papua, unvanquished and unconquerable, coldly disdained the futile efforts of man to tame it.

Solitude gives licence to the imagination ; but even with imagination tightly in leash one could fancy that the sullen lines of jungle were closing in ; approaching stealthily from all sides, like a flowing tide round a sandbank. And the impression was strength-

ened by the rank smell of soil and lush vegetation which drifted in on the scarcely perceptible breeze.

The illusion died with the last tinge of sunset colour, and the dense darkness was full of small sounds. Beetles rustled faintly in the grass; cockroaches and borers scraped and nibbled in the pithy lengths of palm midrib which formed the walls of the house; lizards made sudden darts at their prey in the palm-leaf thatch. A sudden flurry of softly beating wings proclaimed a small night-bird taking his toll of insects; and a stinging irritation on arms and neck argued that mosquitoes of the silent anophile variety were at their work.

A quarter-past seven. There was nothing for it but quinine and bed.

*Papua.*

### KINGFISHER.

At sunlit eve—

A little lake: a liquid gem, serene,  
Tree-girt, reflected trees  
In quiet water seen.

At setting sun—

A parting beam: a shaft of radiant light,  
Low o'er the lake to burn between  
The dusk of day and dawn of night.

But hark! A call! from wild bird's throat;  
And, with the fading echo of the note,  
The spirit of a rainbow, heaven-hung,  
Out from the trees in blazing colours flung.  
Into the beam of gold midge-misted light  
It struck its way, and then in swiftest flight  
Along the sun-flung path it flew,  
Whilst loud and clear it shrilled its call anew.  
A moment's span—and the sun's last ray withdrew.

Now twilight dims the lake and distant hill;  
The mind with strangest thought is overcast:  
Did Phœbus linger in his mighty arc until  
The rainbow's spirit, Halcyon, had passed?

F. G. TURNBULL.

## THE SECOND RENAISSANCE

BY W. J. BLYTON.

WHATEVER the social barriers and economic anomalies of the thirties of last century, undoubtedly it was a time of mental hope and curiosity. Even before then, and certainly later, artisans in the growing towns and craftsmen in the countryside, no less perhaps than the clerical and urban types, felt the wind of 'the new knowledge.' Education had indeed begun before it became compulsory; and the first large reading public, we do well to remember, was called into existence not by School Boards, or ha'penny papers, or 'penny dreadfuls,' but by deliberately 'improving' publications of the miscellany and abridged encyclopædia type, popular yet useful, and issued cheaply by publishing houses who relied for distribution largely upon pedlars on foot and horseback.

Some picturesque circumstances attended this awakening. We hear of the Hungry Forties. Less often do we hear how hungry they were for knowledge; and if it could not be come at in Mechanics' Institutes or at Lectures, it was obtained through the printed word and at the fireside. A forbear of mine describes to me the days when, in the windy Pennines, he and his fellows trudged to the mule-tracks on the dark moorlands to meet the colporteur from Halifax carrying his load of little sixpenny classics (the size of prayer-books) printed by a now-past firm, Milner & Sowerby of that town of hills and winds, quarries and wool. They spelt their way through literature and science with a certain difficulty, never doubting, however, that they had their hands upon a key that opened doors to power. In this way youth made the acquaintance of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, for example, and were entranced with the plain fare, while looking in it in vain for recognisable traces of Wakefield, their neighbour town! This, moreover, is how a number first came upon *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, complete, in a brown dumpy volume almost square by reason of the number of pages, published by W. Nicholson & Sons, of the same hilly northern borough. Indeed small publishers and booksellers shot up everywhere—the Cottles of Bristol, for example, who published first the Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and *The Ancient*

*Mariner* of Coleridge, as perhaps no contemporary London publisher would have dared, and thus opened a fresh chapter in our literature.

All these heirlooms of the past, and any others mentioned here, are on my table now as I write, with Jacob Tonson's Dryden and the Virgil of Dryden—prefaces and woodcuts entire; and the same publisher's Milton, with Andrew Marvell's poem on the blind poet and Elijah Fenton's (Pope's translator-friend's) preface and notes. But keeping to the last-century pioneers of good reading and useful knowledge, look what the 'labouring person' could get with his sixpence (which of course *was* sixpence, and took some coming by). He could acquire Craik's *History of English Literature* in four tight little volumes, and bind them, thanks to Charles Knight who also published in fortnightly parts *Half-Hours with the Best Authors*. I have here Gray's *Letters*, issued by John Sharpe, of Piccadilly, in 1810; and *The Farmer's Boy of Blomfield* by Daly, of Hatton Garden; and *Gems from 'The Spectator'* by Wm. P. Nimmo, of Edinburgh and London.

Constable of Edinburgh before he 'went crash' entertained his dreams of reprinting the world's great books; and the stirring fact is that, *after* the crash, he began to do it. William and Robert Chambers rapidly followed. The publishing houses were not complete without a magazine too—*Blackwood's*, for instance; *Tait's*; *Fraser's*; Smith Elders with the CORNHILL; Chambers with their own. And they liked a good editor moreover; Thackeray is given the chair of the CORNHILL, Froude that of *Fraser's*; Dickens that of *Household Words* and *The Wide, Wide World*.

Thomas Love Peacock, you remember, in his *Crotchet Castle* fulminates wittily (and wrong-headedly) against Brougham and the Whig noblemen of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge for disturbing the torpor of the populace with the culture of the world. He called them 'the Steam Intellect Society,' and affected to pity the workmen of Birmingham and Manchester for having such zealous friends. But note the delightful revenge which Cassell's took. They published his book at sixpence, under Henry Morley's editorship. Oh, those brilliant pocket-sixpennorths from Cassell's in their smooth bindings; so nice to handle even now, so clear a type and page. The series had everything in it from Plutarch's *Lives* to Voltaire; from Milton to Crabbe; from Shelley's *Prometheus* to Sidney Smith's *Letters of Peter Plymley*; Waterton's *Wanderings in South America* and Gilbert White's *Selborne*. Sometimes, on the suburban bookstalls, several are still

to be picked up for several coppers—Butler's sermons on Human Nature (sound stuff) or Barrow (just as sound, in sense and English), or Dryden's urbane prefaces, 'the first polite English.'

Contemporary with all this there was a perfect cataract of encyclopædias, penny magazines of useful knowledge, classics in fortnightly parts, published in the provinces equally with London; and very honest value they were, forming more minds and characters than we guess, and doing it less expensively and perhaps less pretentiously than some vaunted ways since. There were digests of extant knowledge (science, hobbies, history, literature, metaphysics, geography and travel) by Chambers, Rees, Constable, Smellie, Napier, Brewster, Lardner, M'Culloch, Forbes, Tweedie, Thomson, Costello and many another. The young Carlyle at Ecclefechan, in his typical crofter's home, discovered that 'the best university is still a man's own fireside.' Hazlitt tells us of the atmosphere of the time—its striving-forward momentum, its alert curiosity, its self-discipline, and hopes as violent as vague (and creditable)—in his essay *On a First Acquaintance with Poets*. The Brontë sisters in their heathery fastness at Haworth present us with another picture of this 'intense and frugal' life. Did they not read Thackeray, not only as novelist, but as editor of the CORNHILL? Dickens thereabouts edited *Household Words*.

A healthy time surely?—with a wind of dawn blowing through it; despite social anomalies in plenty. Grant that the popular feeling that knowledge would burst open *all* doors was an illusion, still it was an ennobling and inspiring one—nor was it quite the illusion which tired minds in reaction would like to picture it. 'The pursuit of knowledge under difficulties' actually the title of a book popular then—must, so to speak, have 'saved souls' even if the gained knowledge did not, being incomplete and open to revision. Well may we acknowledge that some of these men, young and old, took their patent of nobility, as Burns has it, direct from Almighty God. Anyhow, naïve or wise, justified or not, they have gone now, taking their freight of sanguine prophecies with them—'from the contagion of the world's slow stain . . . secure,'—peacefully unknowing Time's reversals and ironies. Quite a number of districts had their local poet, not so well known as the sifted few—Clare, Bloomfield, Stephen Duck, Hogg the Ettrick Shepherd, Ebenezer Elliott the Corn-law Rhymer, Hartley the Yorkshire rhyming Almanac maker, Lancashire dialect poets in plenty. In Scotland, Wales and Cornwall these worthies



were many, in half the glens and valleys. The pulpits of the time, local councils and the skilled trades were recruited from this hard-won, home-found culture. *The Popular Self-Educator* was eagerly subscribed in monthly parts; *Leigh Hunt's London Journal*—the original bound copies of which are before me now—achieved a quick circulation, mainly by stage-coach and provincial agents. The type is close, but still very legible. The advertisements are chatty, not to say prolix and confidential. Hunt boldly rifled the best new books of the day for extracts of two or three thousand words. On the day of publication of his friend Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*, he transcribed the whole, with his own italicised favourite passages and connective comments. How far this assisted or arrested circulation is not now to be determined. His efforts, here and in *The Indicator* and other charming if short-lived publications, drew the generous praise of Robert Chambers, himself a merchant-adventurer in ideas for the people. On all hands *Demos* had his faithful servants and believers—and improvers.

'They had not our horizons,' does someone object? Granted, they had not yet seen electric light and transit, nor flight (except in capricious and ungainly balloons), nor dining- and sleeping-cars, nor Atlantic liners, nor submarines, tanks, gas-warfare and a World War (save in Scriptural prophecy, as they believed)—but it is arguable that working-men who, even partly comprehending, fought their way through *Paradise Lost*, *Prometheus*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Humphry Davy's *Consolations of Travel*, *Religio Medici*, Herschel on the stars, Hakluyt's *Voyages*, and noble if inconclusive speculations on philosophy and religion, had a horizon not external so much as of 'the mind's internal heaven.' It was among them and their sort that Wordsworth found his first audience, not among the followers of Jeffrey and the reviewers. To them, Bentham and Cobbett addressed themselves. That vivid preaching friar of learning and history, Macaulay, enjoyed at their hands a furore. The University could but have given them the same fare in two noble dead languages: travel could perhaps have but confirmed their reading. Only a generation previously Gray could write truly of their fathers—

'Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,  
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;  
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul.'

That at least had largely ceased to be true.

The ultimate failure of that liberalising experiment, its foundering in the rush for spoils, in the Iron Age, the Franco-Prussian and other wars, the standardising of schools, the whelming of the catch-penny press, is something the sadness of which observers are to-day beginning to recognise. Something has been lost. It is not the knowledge or the sources of it; for they are still there, for anyone to take; but a grace, the thirst for the knowledge and a mystical and effectual belief in its efficacy and its leading somewhere. Arnold Bennett tells us in *Hilda Lessways* and *Clayhanger* how the young things of that day learnt off Tennyson's *In Memoriam* as it came out. We all know the rank and file who made up the faithful Browning Societies. True, Matthew Arnold exhibits to us, with a certain heart-broken patronising smile, the vulgarities and blindnesses which still shadowed that strenuous time, but there was the other side of the medal: the love of Ruskin—however vague or mistaken; the discipleship of Morris, however inconsistent; the tense listening in to Carlyle, then among the prophets, and to Mill, one of the law-givers; the belief in oratory and moral indignation upon public issues, in the Cannings and Gladstones as the mouthpieces of the democratic conscience.

We have moved since then, but into complexity. Faith's fires have burned lower, and the central clues are by no means so easy to agree upon, more's the pity. We are potentially richer—but actually? Doubtful. What is going to arise to integrate and harmonise the score of cultures and semi-cultures which, half-assimilated, surround us to-day? Some would prescribe a love of the weathered classics; others say, a return to centrality and authority in the things of belief; yet others, escape into nature and instinct; many can suggest nothing better than a new utilitarianism, and many more are too modest or indifferent to point to any remedy. However, running thought, like running water, clears itself in time; and the love of the best in art and life is itself a good way toward a solution, even when formal answers delay.

## WE THREE.

BY ELEANOR WILLIAMS-MOORE.

## I.

WHEN Leonev went along the street, the children and the big boys laughed. He made them think of a horse prancing. They shouted it after him, 'Prance, horse, prance!' It was because of the queer way he lifted his right leg and threw it forward and sideways. Like all cripples he hated to be laughed at, so he rarely went outside his workshop. He was very ugly, too, ugly from hating so much all his life, and people feared him. All except the children, who did not know fear, and they, seeing only the comic, continued to laugh. They took every opportunity to jeer at him.

It was after the explosion in which his big, good-natured friend, Alexis, had been so badly hurt, that he fled from Russia with Alexis and Alexis's wife, the little pink and white Katerina. Now, all the experiences of their lives were recalled as 'before the explosion,' and 'after the explosion.' It was their B.C. and A.D.

The big Alexis found work in a factory when they came to Canada. As he stood at his machine through the long hours he was very sad. He would cry quietly to himself to think that he, Alexis Kovshoff, now would never know fatherhood, never see the little wife Katerina mothering his babies. It was cruel for her to be denied mother love, he knew she hungered for children. He had slyly watched the way she lured the little ones off the street into her kitchen, making many excuses to keep them there.

In their small home on the squalid outskirts of the great city Katerina was very busy. She had much to do looking after her two men. Everything must be kept clean and bright, although it was poor, and only three rooms besides Leonev's shop in the front. But sometimes she forgot the work dreaming of the happiness she had known in their little home away off in Russia, with its garden of flowers which she had planted and tended herself, which she would never see again. The ground was so hard here in the city, she felt sure nothing could ever grow in it. Only in cans in the windows could she coax a few weak plants to live.

When Leonev became too restless to sit still bending over the endless worn shoes any longer, he would smoke a pipe beside the kitchen stove, and watch Katerina cooking and cleaning. She did not seem to mind his eyes following her every movement. They talked, or Katerina sang Russian folk-songs to which Leonev kept time with the tap, tap, tap of his left foot, and a short crooning noise.

In the evening when big Alexis returned from his work in the factory, and the supper-table was cleared, the two men would sit for hours over their chess-board, while Katerina sat rocking and mending their clothes.

They had no friends, these three. Only themselves and their memories. Memories which haunted and burned each in a different way. Often Leonev's brought curses to his crooked lips, and a depth of misery to his harsh grey eyes, and he shuddered to think of the evil man his father. Evil and mad. It made him sick with anguish, too, when he thought of his gentle, pious mother, so unlike her coarse husband. From where, he wondered often, had she got her refinement. He knew nothing about her people, nothing, nothing. Only that she had suffered too much and died, leaving him without God or man, only the beast his father. Leaving him without one gentle association until he met Alexis and Katerina.

But a change was coming over Katerina. She was full of moods, sometimes hysterically gay, at others listless and unhappy, or softly pensive, when she seemed to be listening for a call to come to her, or waiting calmly for the inevitable.

It was spring, but you would never have known it in that barren spot. Except for the streets swept clean of snow by the melting rains; except for the downy clouds which trembled across the rich blue of the sky, and except for the strident little voices of the sparrows at mating. There were no trees to throw the scent of their swelling buds into the air, nor soft grasses, nor flowers struggling to meet the call of the sun.

It seemed to Katerina, as she stood dreaming in the open doorway while the warm winds embraced her, filling her heart with fierce longing and desire, that spring could not come to an uglier spot in the world. And she, who if not exactly contented with her lot, at least had been satisfied to wait until they had saved enough to go away and start in a better place, now was all impatience to get away and live. Yes, to live. That was it. She was not living, she felt—only waiting, waiting to live. And

with the rising tide of passion and desire which the springtime sent coursing through her veins, rose rebellion at the monotony and utter barrenness of her life with Alexis. Poor, kind, gentle Alexis! What mockery to call what he gave her, love. The drab sterility of it. Her lips curled involuntarily with the thought.

Meanwhile Leonev, in his quick, subtle way, watched Katerina's changing moods, and knew her suffering. Fiercely his turbulent nature rebelled, and plans began to weave back and forth in his brain. One day as she stood gazing out at the warm sunshine sparkling on the wet earth and dripping eaves, he came unheard to her side.

'Of what do you dream, Katerina?' he softly asked, touching her bare arm ever so lightly with his long crooked fingers.

Startled, she flinched as though he had hurt her, and looked quickly down at her arm, half-expecting to see it burned, the flame of their meeting had been so sharp. But except for a flush over face and throat as she told him he talked nonsense, she had something else to do besides dream dreams, Katerina never showed that she had received a message, and went on with her work.

Alexis also saw the change coming over her. He too understood, and grieved still more in his great kind-hearted way, longing to set her free.

One day when she and Leonev were alone she startled him with the question, 'What is life, Leonev?'

To which he did not reply at once, but pulled deep on his pipe, while Katerina waited. Then, 'Life is living—living is loving—that is, the right to express oneself through passion—children—parts of oneself, going on and on eternally.'

Silently the woman looked at him, repeating his words over slowly, meditating on their meaning.

'Katerina!' he called. She did not seem to hear.

'Katerina!' He rose now and pranced towards her, holding her eyes with his own which flashed and burned with a deep purpose. 'How much longer must we do without each other,' his voice was low and resonant, 'how much longer, Katerina?'

He took her hands in his, sliding his fingers up her warm arms. She swayed slightly. His fingers tightened to a grip.

'No, no, Leonev! Never, never!' With a great effort Katerina closed her eyes to shut out the power of his own.

But it was his moment. Swiftly he seized her in his arms, dragging her unresistingly down to the bench, where he kissed

her frantically. Mad kisses, on mouth, on eyes, on throat, on breast.

Katerina opened her eyes, looking deep into his. Softly she laughed, a full happy laugh, her lips remaining parted while she swiftly stretched out her arms, putting them about Leonev, caressing his rough, bristling hair, and patting his face from which all the harsh ugliness seemed momentarily erased by the softening influence of the woman's touch, and the rich comfort of it.

'You belong to me now, Katerina, all to me, and I will love you as you have never known love,' Leonev said feverishly, while a thrill of fearful pleasure stole over Katerina.

In the days which followed, Katerina was joyously happy; Leonev worked more industriously when he heard her sing, and Alexis reacted to her mood, and took heart.

As the weather grew warmer, and the evenings longer, the men gave up their chess, and sat out in the small yard where the hard ground was cleanly swept each day by Katerina. There Leonev read aloud to them stories written by their own countrymen.

The note of joy Alexis heard in Katerina's life now did not cause him to question, but a strange uneasiness stirred him. He wanted to watch her, never remove his eyes from her in fact. Without realising it he was fascinated by the changes both physical and mental she was experiencing.

Then one day Katerina went softly in to Leonev's workshop, and touched him on the shoulder as he bent over his task. He looked up, smiling at her through his ugliness. Taking her hand, he kissed it roughly. She had only one thought in her mind, only one thing to say.

'Katerina is going to bear a child,' she announced simply, in a detached manner, as though she was still struggling and groping through a mist of doubt to a full realisation of the mystery.

For a moment Leonev sat as though stunned by the news. Then with vibrant release he sprang up, prancing about, gesticulating wildly, laughing and shouting, 'Our child, our child, and it's mine, mine, mine! The ugly Leonev, the "Man Who Pranced," the poor cripple, is to become a father! I, I, Leonev! Oh! Katerina, be joyful, be merry, eh? Now you will not ask any more "What is Life?" For this is Life, love—passion—children—oneself going on and on eternally.'

Unheard by the two so intent on each other was the shout of a small boy passing the workshop window, 'Prance, horse, prance!'



It was the woman's logic that broke through Leonev's ecstasy. 'We cannot go on living with Alexis.'

He was silent a moment, then, 'No, we must go away. We three will seek a new home.'

Katerina gave a sigh of contentment, and a satisfied smile fluttered over her placid features as she turned the exquisite thought over and over, 'We three, we three.'

Quietly, stealthily they laid their plans, and one day Alexis returned to a little house strangely, ominously silent, where he found no response to his shouts for Katerina. Rumpling his thick, black hair he rushed through the length and breadth of the little house, his great bulk swaying from room to room. Dazed, he returned to the kitchen, and threw himself on a chair by the table, leaning his shaggy head on his hands. Slowly he found himself reading some words written on a torn piece of paper. Over and over he read them, until he got them in their right order, and their meaning clear.

'We three have gone away together,' was what he read. So that was it. We three!

Dully he thought that the little wife Katerina did not understand him, nor how much he would have loved her to be happy, loved her child, and still loved his friend. Now they were gone, and he did not know where to find them. He could not bear the thought that he would never see them again.

'Katerina, Katerina,' he cried bitterly, 'you need not have gone away and left me, you need not have gone away.'

Across the slight, stifled sound of his tears a noise from the street cut sharply. The boys outside had returned to their game of taunting Leonev. Pebbles flung at the window-pane rattled smartly like hail-stones.

'Leonev! Leonev! Prance, horse, prance!' they called.

## II.

Since the wife of Alexis Kovshoff had run away with his friend Leonev, the men at the factory where Alexis worked had annoyed him with questions. They couldn't understand why he continued to live alone.

'Give up your little house, and take a room with a family who will look after you; then you can save money to enjoy yourself with pretty girls and a drink now and then. Aren't you lonely

in Montreal?' the men would ask with a wink and a slap on the back.

'No, no,' he would answer with a slow shake of his big, shaggy head, going off by himself to the little house. He felt he must wait where he was; Katerina might need him and return. How awful if he had gone away and she would not know where to find him. No, no, he would wait, some day she would return, and everything must be kept just as it was when she left.

Alexis taught himself a housewife's tasks. He cooked his own meals and made his own bed, washed and mended his clothes, cleaned the four rooms and polished the stove. Clumsy, laborious and slow he was, but determined and plodding he met his needs in a rough fashion. Experience taught him to outwit whatever wronged or hurt him. It might be too high a price he had paid to a crafty shopkeeper when he made his simple purchases at the end of the day; or burning his hand on an unprotected handle of a pot as he prepared his food; or a darning-needle run under his thumb-nail while he made an effort to mend his socks; or a sliver of wood lodged in his palm as he scrubbed the kitchen floor on Saturday afternoon when he had a half-holiday from the factory.

He had no friends in Canada, no one to turn to for comfort. He thought he should have a talk with Father Dahl, the kindly priest of the Greek Orthodox Church on the next street. It was years since he had been to service, only in Russia once or twice after he was married. Maybe he would see what prayer could do for him. But he did not break his habit of years.

Once another shoemaker wanted to rent the room in the front which had been Leonev's shop, but Alexis could not bear that a stranger should sit upon the bench where his friend Leonev had sat, and fill the house with the sound of his hammer upon countless worn shoes. So he refused.

At first he did not know how to pass the time on Sunday. It had been such a happy day when it was shared with Katerina and Leonev. There were those chess games with Leonev, and the stories he read aloud to them, and the good soup Katerina made for their supper. Since they left he had learned how very much he had relied upon them.

Now he had only her plants, frail begonias and scraggy geraniums to care for. Every morning before he set out for the factory he watered them. In the evening too he would tend them, pull off a dead leaf, cut a bloom which had gone to seed, or dig around

the roots to loosen the soil. Were they not the only living things left to him which had been a part of her?

He was bitterly lonely. Again and again he asked himself, 'Why did they go away and leave me?' That had been months ago in the spring of the year. Now it was fall, and wind and frost vied with each other in torturing the earth. The trees stood naked, shivering, all their flattering summer garments stripped from them, rudely tossed hither and thither. Overhead the clouds scudded dark and low. Alexis did not mind the cold, he was big and strong, but he hated the mournful voice of the wind, and the clouds that shut out the sun from a world already too sad, and the penetrating rain soaking him through and through when he went for his long walks, because, in his way, Alexis searched for Katerina.

At times he felt strangely tempted to go to the gay saloon, drink and make friends, but that would mean forgetting, and he never wanted to forget, no, not for one single moment. So he ate his solitary supper, slept in his solitary bed, and waited. As Katerina and Leonev had waited for their day, so, now, with faith in inexorable equity, he awaited his.

At the factory he plodded on with his work, growing more proficient. His employers noted his painstaking labours and promoted him to be foreman of his shop with an increase in wages. But Alexis continued to live in the same frugal way.

One day he overheard some of his own countrymen talking together about a course in English they could take at small cost. He enquired how he might join the class. His studies led him often to the municipal library, and he began to read for himself, finding comfort and companionship in the characters of great native writers, who lived as he did, suffered as he did, and hoped as he did. These became his friends, making him forget at times his loneliness in the silent little house as he sat warm and comfortable by the big stove often far into the night.

No one came to disturb his hermit-like existence, so it was with surprise that he heard a loud knock on his door one stormy night. Thinking someone had surely made a mistake and come to the wrong house, he did not disturb himself, but shouted to ask who was there. To his deep consternation when the door opened, the Very Rev. Peter Dahl, with whom he had only a slight acquaintance, entered. Alexis felt bewildered by this unusual visit, and trembled with expectation.

Hastily he returned the priest's salutation, helped him to remove

his heavy coat wet with sleet, and offered him the best chair in the house. While his guest was warming his fingers at the fire, Alexis fetched a bottle of native port and two glasses from a cupboard. As he carefully sipped his wine, Father Dahl slowly related the reason for his visit.

'Alexis Kovshoff, I know of the great sorrow that came to you in the spring of the year. I know how you sought for Katerina and Leonev. I pitied you, my friend, so I too sought and enquired of many people. To-day I have found them.'

'Oh, little father!' Alexis cried out, burying his face in his hands, and rocking back and forth on his chair. Surely it was too good to be true, he thought, too good to be true. Yet in his heart he knew he would hear of them some day, perhaps welcome them back, and they themselves, not just their ghosts as now, would fill the little house once more. Even a child's laughter might be there. The written message Katerina left behind had predicted a child. How well he remembered the words, 'We three have gone away together,' just as if the child was already born.

'And Katerina, she is well?' he asked eagerly, but afraid to enquire if there was a child.

'She is well,' Father Dahl replied, hesitated a moment, then continued, 'Katerina is satisfied now; she has a child, a girl-child.'

So she had her child at last, the child he could not give her. Alexis jumped up, walked about, gazed intently at the curtains, the flower-pots in the windows, the dishes in the cupboard; touched them to see if they were real, felt himself to see if he was real, wondered in his confusion if it was all only a dream, turned to see if the priest was still sitting there. Yes, he was, and he had lighted his pipe from which spirals of smoke curled upwards complacently.

With a deep sigh Alexis resumed his seat, and Father Dahl resumed his narrative in his full arresting voice, while his black eyes flashed, and his black beard shook with earnestness; his large hands clasped and unclasped themselves between his knees as he leaned forward impressively, 'Katerina sent for the Rev. Nicholas Pavlov who has a church in the north end of the city, and he at once told me.'

Alexis groaned. The intense relief he felt at hearing of Katerina after all these months was so great it pained him. He kept running his fingers through his shaggy black hair which proclaimed his sorrow in its whitening strands. His great bulk moved nervously on his chair, making it creak with complaint.

'And what of Leonev?' he demanded abruptly.

'Leonev is very ill, I am afraid,' the priest replied softly, 'and as he has been ill for some time, they are in want. That is why Katerina sent for Father Pavlov.'

'Did she send for me?' Alexis asked anxiously.

'No, my friend, she did not.'

'Then I cannot go to her.'

'But you must go to her; she needs you; needs your friendship. I shall take you to her.'

Alexis's longing to see his wife again seemed suddenly replaced by fear—fear of how she would look at him, how she would speak to him, his little pink and white Katerina; or perhaps she might refuse to see him.

'No, no, little father, I cannot go,' he protested vehemently, 'but you . . . you will take them help.' Hastily he emptied his pockets. 'See, here is money to buy them food and fuel, or whatever they need. Take it now and go to them, but I . . . I love her too well, I cannot go.'

Father Dahl held up a warning hand, 'Wait, it is late. I can do nothing to-night, Father Pavlov has attended to their needs. You have a big heart, a great understanding, Alexis Kovshoff, I know, because of what I have heard of you in the parish. Your generosity towards Katerina and Leonev is more divine than human; your desire for their happiness beyond most men's comprehension. As to their sin, it is not for me to judge, only to counsel, to point out what I believe to be right. Sin cannot touch the soul, because the soul is God. Now I believe that you should go to them in their need. This is where they are living.' He handed Alexis a slip of paper. 'I will call for you early to-morrow morning. Try to rest, my friend, and may the blessing of God be upon you.'

As Father Dahl went out into the darkness of howling wind and lashing sleet, his place in the little house seemed to be filled by all these unleashed furies. Rest, thought Alexis, as he strode up and down. Rest, when his whole nature seethed and his thoughts raced in confusion.

Then he knew that he must see Katerina at once, that very night. Wait till the morning? No, no. He started forth, enquiring his way as he transferred from one tramcar to another on his long journey. He never knew the city of Montreal could cover so great a space. It seemed to his impatient mind that he must have gone miles and miles, for hours and hours, as he

travelled from Pointe-aux-Trembles on the east side, to the outskirts of the north.

At length he stopped before a dilapidated three-storey building. As he realised this was the place, Alexis began to tremble, and with difficulty mounted the two flights of stairs. He paused on the threshold. There, he thought, just beyond that thin bit of wood, was all he held dear in the world. He could not enter. But his desire to behold Katerina conquered his weakness. He softly pushed open the door.

Greedily his famished gaze snatched at the central tableau, then, as if his glimpse of paradise was all he could endure for the moment, his eyes travelled hastily to absorb all they fell upon. The bare attic walls and floor, the tattered curtains hanging before one small window, the rough table with its remnants of a meal, the box on the floor with soft things in it crushed with the imprint of a tiny body, and then back to the centre of the room where Katerina sat by the stove oblivious of everything but the lusty babe at her breast.

At this moment Alexis knew a greater tenderness than he had ever known before. Timidly he stepped towards her. Katerina looked up. Their eyes met. Defiant, unafraid were the woman's; humble, beseeching were the man's. A spasm passed over Katerina as if a not too gentle hand had brought her back to the reality of life again. Of what had been her dreams? She did not speak.

Alexis now felt unexpectedly conscious that he would have to struggle for what he desired; that it might not be easy to persuade Katerina to return with him. He must find a way.

'I have come to help you, Katerina, to lighten your burden, and I am lonely, I cannot live without you. Do not send me away, surely we may be friends.'

A dull indifference swept over Katerina's face. Fiercely she pointed to the bed in the corner, 'Hush, he is dying.'

The grief in her voice filled the room. Alexis recoiled before it. He approached the bed. Surely this pale shadow of a man was not his old friend Leonev, whose fiery passion had carried Katerina off her feet.

'Leonev,' he whispered as he sank to his knees, groping through a mist of tears for the hand of his friend. The sick man opened his eyes, then he tried to raise himself but was too weak. Alexis helped him. With an effort Leonev spoke his name, 'Alexis!' In



that one word was conveyed all his love for his friend, all his longing for him, all his wonder that he had come.

'Yes, Leonev, it is I. I have come to take you home.'

'Home!' Leonev repeated. Slowly a change enveloped his habitual expression with a strange spiritual beauty. 'Yes, I . . . I am going home . . . but I go alone, Alexis, all alone, unto the paradise set apart for little Russians. I am glad to see you before I go. Say you forgive me and Katerina for hurting you and, Alexis, will you look after Katerina and our little Anna, or is it too much to ask of you?'

His voice had sunk to a whisper. He seemed to collapse now, his remaining strength exhausted by the strain he had put upon himself. With gentle caresses Alexis drew him into his strong arms. His voice vibrating tenderly, he assured him his one desire in life was to be reunited with Katerina; and that desire was so strong he would care for the little Anna as well since she was hers. In his emotion he would not even listen to Leonev's talk of dying. Why he, strong Alexis, would nurse him back to health. But even while he spoke, Leonev breathed his denial of life.

Katerina's grief was dumb, too deep for tears and lamentation. Only in her eyes might be read her stricken questioning of fate. Alexis felt he must know at once what she intended to do next. He referred to their future. She did not hesitate to speak plainly to make her position clear.

'Leonev gave me a love such as few women can ever know,' she stated proudly; 'he gave me my child too, and no one, not even death, can rob me of all this. It is mine for ever.'

Alexis bowed his head before her fearless truth. Heart of his heart, he understood her so well. But, he knew that while death annulled the past, it arranged the future by taking away Leonev, and it might give him back Katerina.

'You will come back, Katerina, to our home?' Timidly Alexis put the momentous question, and held his breath for her answer.

'Yes, Alexis, I will return with Anna,' she replied without demur.

'Very well, Katerina, we three shall go back together.'

*Montreal.*

## DREAMS INTO FINE GOLD.

### I. VISION.

STEALTHY as padding cat, the gloom  
Drew curtains all about the frowsy room;  
Fire dimmed to ash, the book slid from his hand . . .

Dreaming, he saw Etain the Fair

Standing there

Moon limned, moon drawn from some old faëry land;  
Berries, small moons in mist, about her hair,  
Green-sea kirtle a-cling; arms, long and bare,  
Glimmering white  
Like foam, new-broken, kissed by a starry light.  
*More lovely than the sigh of muted strings;*  
*More lovely than the hopes that drift on a swallow's wings;*  
*Lovelier—oh more lovely than the sea,*  
*Pearl-faint and lulled beneath flushed clouds, was she.*

Trembling, he knew himself to be  
One with the poets who had looked upon  
The soul of Beauty; then the dream was gone.

### II. COLOUR.

Thus, in humility, I give again  
The loveliness that lives for me.  
I lap my soul in colours, drawn  
From the tail of the peacock, trailing the lawn;  
From grass after rain;  
From flame spattered dawn;  
From the ecstatic arc of the rainbow that spills  
Its tenderness into the sea;  
And almost I drown in a holy gold glow,  
World-lost among daffodils.  
Others who bathe in pools of living hues  
Transmute them into music that may fall  
Upon dried hearts as easily as dews  
That heal bruised leaves; the greatest gift of all

Is theirs who twine bright patterns with their feet  
And waken dreams as radiant and as fleet  
As the dawn wind ; but I, who long to rise on Colour's wings,  
Have only words, harsh, pallid, halting things.

### III. GIFTS.

Slow fingers moved above the mound  
Of rainbow words, treasure that he had sought  
Among the dust of ages and of men ;  
Slow fingers moved caressingly, and then  
With quiet labour and much craft he wrought  
Rich ornaments for his beloved's hair.  
He lightly wound  
Long, starry necklaces of word-gemmed thought  
About her throat ; their lustre added grace  
To her soft form and to her dreaming face  
But she, being young and proud and very fair,  
Half scorned the gifts and did not greatly care  
For him who gave . . .  
Now he is dead, unknowing, cold, and years  
Have stolen all her charm ; no broken wave  
Of the salt sea is bitter as her tears  
Who weeps to hear bright beauty's passing knell . . .  
Only his gifts, untarnishable, tell  
What rose she was before the first snows fell.

MEG SEATON.

## A NUN OF THE FORUM.

BY LUCIA M. COOKE.

GERMANICUS lay resting between two campaigns on the broad marble terrace in front of his ancestral villa in the Alban hills, from whence he could catch glimpses of the Campagna far down below where the legions had so often passed under his command. Other Generals had passed that way to take their Triumph in the Imperial City beyond, but Germanicus had never aspired to Triumphs of any kind. On the contrary, his desire had been to efface himself as much as possible, to keep out of the limelight, and to win his battles, since battles must be won, as quietly and unostentatiously as possible. He was a fine soldier and had never lost an Eagle, but he was shrewdly aware that fame was a precarious possession, that laurel wreaths were expensive head-gear, and that the martial passage of the Sacred Way would cripple any man with the largess expected of him on that occasion. Moreover, he was a countryman at heart—no Rome for him with its intrigues and plots. When his term of military service was over, he looked forward to nothing better than retiring to the old brown villa of his fathers, surrounded by the volcanic hills sacred to Vesta, and there, with true Vergilian instincts, cultivate his lettuce-beds, fruit-trees and garden plot, with the beehives ranged against the southern wall.

But the Fates were never idle in old Roman days, and in spite of his prudence in avoiding troublesome honours, the Three Sisters had decreed that he should not escape them altogether; and such an honour of the most unwelcome kind was even then on its way to him; its step could be heard approaching, a military step, heavy and ponderous, resounding on the mosaic pavement behind him, and Germanicus, turning suddenly round, found a Centurion of the Prætorian guard at his elbow bearing a document with the Imperial seal attached, which he delivered, with the Fascist salute and a 'Hail, O General!' into his hands. 'Was it a recall?' He served a restless master, the Inventor of Royal Progresses, as someone has called him, with whom indeed, he had 'progressed' over most of the known world. His glance lingered over the familiar scene. Was he to leave all this? True, he had often done so before, but

each time it had become more irksome, and in the sharp discomfort of the moment he was almost ready to wish that his Imperial Master really lay in the great Mausoleum by Tibur which he had built for himself, his restlessness for ever ended. Opening the disquieting missive, he found the contents worse than any he could have imagined,—a blow indeed! Dismay, anger, dissent passed over his countenance, and he was about to speak, when the Centurion, knowing that the Imperial correspondence often roused these emotions in the receiver, quietly reminded him 'It is an order.' 'And shall be obeyed,' Germanicus answered, placing his lips to the broken seal. The Centurion had checked him in time. 'Return at the sixth hour for an answer,' he said in dismissal, and as the sound of the lictor's footsteps died away in the distance, Germanicus spread out the document before him with a despairing gesture, and read the fatal sentences over again.

The Emperor was at that moment at home in his great villa at Tivoli, much occupied in settling the affairs of state which had got into arrears during his long absence, and in performing certain civil and religious functions which had fallen into disuse for the same reason. It was about one of the latter that he was now writing to Germanicus, and the letter concerned the appointment of a Vestal Virgin to the mother convent at Rome. The post was not so easy to fill as it had once been, since the gods had begun to go out of repute, but Germanicus was known to follow the religion of Numa, and to cherish a personal devotion to the old national gods. The Emperor wrote tolerantly, perhaps quizzically, with a touch of well-concealed contempt for so much conservatism. When one has travelled so widely, it is difficult to hold to the old landmarks. During his journeys he had looked into all religions, and dabbled in their mysteries, and if he held the national religion a sham or a failure, he could not, or would not, attempt to alter it. Religion was the policy of the State, and on such occasions as the choice of a Vestal, it was providential for the gods that a few devout pagans still existed to supply their needs, and the Emperor in his somewhat anomalous position as *Pontifex Maximus* was glad to know where to turn for his supplies. Not that he is writing in his sacerdotal character to his old General, but rather as one friend to another in a simplicity of intercourse which the great Emperor affected, living among his soldiers as a soldier, and travelling without pomp or ceremony with his chosen companions of the road.

So the letter is to his dear friend and companion, his beloved

Germanicus, *knowing thy love for the gods and thy constancy in their service*, and praying him to provide a daughter of his house for the service of Vesta, *if any among thy children be found of requisite age, for that which is dear to us is dear also to the gods*. The Emperor does not fail in a cultured age to make apposite allusion to the Alban ancestry of the goddess, and to Alba Longa, so near Germanicus' own patrimony, with appropriate reference which Germanicus will reverently appreciate to that early source from whence Rome had drawn the first supply of Vestal Virgins—I do but seek to draw another Vestal from the birthplace of Vesta herself. writes the Emperor, and surely what soil more fitted to produce a fire-maiden, with its volcanic lakes and rocks, and all those twists and cracks given to its surface by those hidden central fires? With such pleasant dilettante wanderings of the fancy couched in a tactful phraseology which he knows will be acceptable to the reader, the request is made, and the letter flows on with much urbanity and friendliness to the final hope *that thy old wound troubles thee less, and that I fail not of thy company next year in Spain*.

The unexpected honour fell heavily upon Germanicus, for the lot must fall upon the youngest of the flock,—the dearest child. His other children, born in his frequent absences, had grown up without much parental guidance, but this child of his old age, reared beneath his eye, had given a new intimate delight to paternity, such as, in his service to his country, and in the somewhat exacting friendship of the Emperor, he had had hitherto little leisure to enjoy. Did the childless Hadrian realise the sacrifice he was demanding? How had he known of the little one's existence? Doubtless, he had had himself informed on that point, for he was known to have a love of detail down to the smallest particulars. Perhaps, he himself had revealed it in those lonely talks in many a camp under alien skies; in that case he could have bitten his tongue out, for he had betrayed his own child. The stern Roman father within him, so often misrepresented in history, melted like wax, and in a voice whose urgency he could not restrain, he cried out 'Domitia! Domitia!'

His wife, a matron of the best Roman type, with her broad level brows, high-bridged nose and finely chiselled mouth, appeared on the scene. 'Thou didst call, Germanicus,' she said quietly, though by the seals on the letter she foresaw trouble at hand. 'Is it a recall?' she asked. Letters from the Emperor usually meant partings; her life had been strewn with leave-taking on his account.



'That were a small matter,' said the afflicted old man. 'My life has always been at the Emperor's disposal, but now he demands the life of our child; our youngest, Flavia Publicia. But read it for thyself, Wife,' he said, thrusting the Imperial missive into her hands. Surely she would feel as he did, and her woman's wits would discover some means of escape. But Domitia's brow remained calm, she showed no distress, and her first words sank like lead into his consciousness: 'What an honour for our house! What a prospect for our little one! To think I bore her for this!'

The letter could receive but one answer; underneath its suave and bland expressions ran the fiat of the Emperor, which at all cost must be obeyed. The gods also must not be denied, the great silent patient gods, whom he, at least, in a degenerate age, had served unflinchingly. So one spring morning, the little Flavia Publicia, leaving the kids and goats and the grey olive orchards, and the festooned vines praised by Horace, and the great volcanic lakes into which she and her brothers had peered with awe, as into the very presence-chamber of the gods, set forth on the first journey of her life. The little procession with its escort wound down the steep hill-paths, by white villas and farms, along the Via Appia Nova with its post-houses for travellers, on to the great level plain below, bright with green flashes of spring where the white oxen stood in the furrows of an antique husbandry, looking up under their great wide horns at the group passing along the paved highway; for they also had given of their race to the sacrifice of the gods, and this white maiden, must she not also be yielded up, that the earth might continue fruitful, and that they might not plough in the sun all day in vain? In at the Porta Capena, by the Flavian Amphitheatre, mounting the rising ground under the Arch of the Seven Candlesticks, and over the pavement of the Via Sacra; until the little procession, with its living sacrifice, reached the temple of the goddess, where the short dedicatory service awaited them at the hands of the Emperor himself in his character of *Pontifex Maximus*, who would lead the young vestal by the hand, addressing her by the soft name of *Amata*, while the curls fell under the temple shears, and a dress unlike the garb of childhood was placed upon her.

Flavia Publicia was now a dedicated Vestal of the first nunnery the world has ever seen, the forerunner of all the conventual orders that were to come after it,—yet, who of those present at that antique ceremony could have recognised the link that bound it to future ages, or could have foreseen on that bright spring morning of the

year (*circa*) A.D. 137, the long line of monks, hermits, anchorites, and nuns that were to follow in its train ?

But the little Flavia is not concerned with any age but her own, and has indeed enough to occupy her in that. At first, presumably, to remain the pet of the sisterhood, and the playmate of the kindly household slaves, until, her age advancing, the Mother Abbess began that careful course of training which had for its aim the high perfectibility of word and action, a grave composure of mien and gesture, a careful charge of the body as the door of the senses, all of which came as no foreign or difficult aim to the child of Germanicus ; the devout home life had been a preparation for convent life, and in moments of home-sickness, the gods were so intimately bound up with that memory of home, that their service was an enduring consolation.

But though the gods were so great, how far from solemn was the life, or overweighted with gravity ! The only solemn time was when the fires were extinguished on the 1st March, the Latin New Year's Day. Then how empty the Temple appeared ! How cold and dark without the fires of 'glowing Vesta !' The gods seemed out of reach, the old soft sense of order was gone, and confusion come to take its place. The cloud was not lifted until the new fire had been kindled by means of the spectrum, direct from the sun itself, 'drawing a pure and unpolluted flame from the sunbeams.' To Flavia Publicia that flicker of friendly flames brought back the memory of the home-hearth, and the Lares and Penates sprinkled at every meal. The great benign goddess would, she knew, send a special blessing there in return for services rendered her, and when her young brother, Manlius, struck the flint and the slaves brought combustibles, Vesta herself would aid them, exorcising the sprites that dwell in the elements to plague weary housewives, and causing the flame to rise merrily on many a winter's night, when the Forum had its coating of snow, and the wind howled icily round the great columns, and shepherds away in the Campagna crouched under wattled huts, and wolves sniffed round lonely villages, and the thin grass shivered over the winter crevice of the lizard.

After the burden of winter came the gay Festival of the Vestalia, the great reception day of the goddess, the 9th of the month of Juno, on which day due honour was paid to her for the help and protection she had afforded her votaries, a protection such as we now, perhaps, cover with a prosaic fire insurance. In the glow and heat of summer, when hearth-fires were low or almost extinct, the

women walked barefoot through all the passage-ways of the city, passing up the Via Sacra in a woman's Triumph, a pacific procession quite unlike the stern Triumph of the men with their harsh clang of armour, and loud arrogance and boast of war. To-day no blood is to be shed and so gentle and simple a Festival is this that the lower animals are permitted to take their part in it, though their share in pagan rites was not always so pleasant to them as to-day, as sacrificial bulls and rams might testify. For many days votive offerings of meat and dishes of fish and herbs have been sent to the Temple to be offered up to the goddess; and as the women and children and braying mules and bleating kids crowd round the shrine, the absorbing family worship of Vesta seems to be only an earlier form of Madonna worship, the home goddess of the Romans of to-day, worshipped with just that same gleam of perpetual fire at shrine and altar, and called upon with just the same importunity to share the domestic cares of womanhood.

But in spite of Festivals, even to the number of 135 in the year, life was not all play in the Convent under the Palatine. Flavia Publicia must learn the use of tablet and stylus, the value of numbers, the flattened form of geography common to that age, the records of her Order, and the history of her country, the latter subject lightened by Latin legends, taking the place of fairy-tales to the child—such as the Twins in their riverside cradle with the attendant wolf and shepherd, and the later Dioscuri, the Twin Horsemen, who turned the tide in favour of the Romans at the Battle of Lake Regillus—a legend peculiarly suited to Vestal interests since a later writer has recorded how, after this exploit:

'When they drew nigh to Vesta,  
They vaulted down amain,  
And washed their horses in the well  
That springs from Vesta's fane.  
And straight again they mounted,  
And rode to Vesta's door;  
Then, like a blast away they passed,  
And no man saw them more.'

The young Vestal, as she tended the shrine, may have hoped for a second miracle to happen, but though the Military Knights with olive-wreathed helmets assembled there in procession once a year, from the Temple of Mars, the celestial warriors never repeated their hasty visit.

If liberty be somewhat curtailed to the country child, the life of the city even as enjoyed by the Vestals is broad and varied, the spectacles both within and without are full of fascination,—the brilliant court, the public shows and ceremonies, the chariot-drives through the narrow streets of Rome gay with the life of fashion, of art, of dominion, of luxury ; and in the convent itself there is much doing, and a pleasant stir of change and progress among the Vestals. It is now the end of her first period of training, and Flavia Publicia is about to enter upon a more advanced stage of her career, with added responsibility and new dignity, amid pleasant congratulations and little ceremonies. She may now take her turn in watching the sacred fire, even sharing those solemn midnight vigils when all Rome is sleeping, and the fires must be hourly tended lest they wane and calamity befall the nation ; she may add her voice to the daily prayers of intercession on behalf of her country ; she may knead the salt cakes for the sacrifices, and pour out the wine and oil which the flames lick up so greedily ; for childhood is past, and she is a Vestal of the great Roman Empire ;—now it is the death of the Emperor that throws the city into mourning ; or it is the memorable summer when the fever of Rome laid waste her powers, and necessitated that first and only break in convent life, and the never-to-be-forgotten visit to her home. For no man, not even the great Galen himself, might cross the threshold of the *virginea domus*, and the malady in this case not abating under the care of the Abbess, and the remedies of the Sisterhood, there was a talk of removing her to the house of some noble matron in Rome, as was the practice, to give secular opportunity for the medical science of the day. But she had begged insistently for the hill air of her own country, and thither, in slow stages, she had been borne by litter across the wide Campagna, weak and shaken to the last sands of life. Yet, when the bearers began the steep ascent upon the other side, and the sweet air swayed the curtains of her travelling couch, new life returned to her, and she sank with relief into a home peace salutary to mind and body. All the family gods of her childhood, long outgrown, were round her, those innumerable gods, more in number than the days of the year, one for every need as it arose : Rumina, who presides over the nursery, and round whose altar they as the children of the family had stood, while her father poured out the libation, not of wine as to the other gods, but of milk, the food of all young growing creatures ; Vatican who helps the infant to draw his first breath ; Cuba, who makes him docile

and tractable, and of a sweet temper; Fabulinus, who watches over his first speech; and now, above all these, Salvator the god of health, who takes charge of the frail tenement of the body, and gives sanity to men. She, herself, was looked upon in those white humours of sickness as very near the invisible population, and in days of slow convalescence the simple country folk knelt in awe of her, and, at least, many a honeycomb was brought by simple hands to tempt the deistic nature within her. Even her own people held themselves a little apart, as at a semi-divine presence in the house.

It was towards the end of this visit that Germanicus, resting in his old age upon the same terrace with the same view below him, called her to him. 'See, my daughter, I have left thee the little house on the hill, with *sesterces* sufficient for thy need, so that, if thou shouldst ever wish to return, thou mayest be free to do so.'<sup>1</sup> And Flavia Publicia, embracing the old man tenderly, answered, 'Who may foretell the future? O my father, does it not lie in the lap of the gods?'

But 'the little house on the hill' would never see Flavia Publicia. When some years later she, in her turn, became Virgo Vestalis Maxima of the little community in the southern angle of the Forum Romanum, 'the noblest of pagan Emperors' the philosopher-king, the second Antonine, was on the throne. The times were troubled, and the Emperor had little space for his pontifical duties, yet when the enemy on the Danube was quiet, and the 'insolent Parthian' was at rest, it might be conjectured that he would desire to enlighten the Vestals from his store of philosophic reflections in the same earnest way that he desired to enlighten all his people, even to the extent of giving that wonderful three days' cycle of lectures to all Rome before his last departure for the seat of war.

In the philosophic discussions which the Vestalis Maxima might share with the Emperor, was the gain all on one side? Might not the Abbess run before the Emperor in a woman's quick philosophy, not learned but intuitive, and reach a higher level than the laborious system of the Stoics? One advantage, at least, always remained on her side,—the Emperor must lay aside the moralist and philosopher, and appear before her as the Pontifex Maximus; and here the Abbess was on her own ground, well versed in her subject, and able to give the Emperor himself points in mythology.

<sup>1</sup> The rule of the Order required the Vestals to take the vow of celibacy for thirty years, after which time they might return to the world and marry if they wished to do so.



At other times, also, Flavia Publicia must have had many and varied opportunities of testing those wiseways and maxims, as she pursued her busy life—conducting her household, managing the slaves;—training the novices;—granting this request, rejecting that;—receiving this great lady, or visiting that;—signing wills and documents with her unquestionable signature;—visiting the law-courts on behalf of some injured person, the licitor with the gilt fasces clearing the way as she walked across the short distance from her dwelling to strike dismay into the hearts of the opposing party in the suit, who had no such overwhelming witness to bring forward;—sitting for another votive statue (Flavia Publicia has six dedicated to her) given by some grateful recipient of benefits, while the *pictores virginum vestalium*, a privileged sculptorhood recording the honour over shop and studio, worked in hot haste to catch the busy face in the clay kept under the wet sheet by the fountain;—appearing as part of the official countenance by the State of the public games and shows, and sitting with her Vestals in the beautiful if evil presence of Faustina the Younger, surrounded by Court dandies, with the noise of the gladiators and the cries of the populace shutting out the gossip and scandal and laxities of the day that were even less fit for her ears. Was it indeed possible in the midst of voluptuous Rome to turn one's thoughts inwards into that 'little garden of one's own mind, where a silence so profound may be enjoyed'? Could she prove as the Emperor had done that 'in every time and place, it rests with thyself to use the events of the hour religiously'? And was it really possible, even in the Flavian amphitheatre itself, to believe that 'it is in thy power to think as thou wilt', and that 'the essence of things is in thy thoughts about them.'

Worldly as the public life of a Vestal would undoubtedly appear in the eyes of a modern recluse, at least, it fitted her to act and to maintain her position in the ancient world of which she was a part; but, though the first to live the separate life, she would have owned no affinity to the black-robed straitened communities that came after her.

There were no cell-bound souls in the days when Flavia Publicia ruled her little community under the Palatine;—she was free to come and go, conducting the affairs of her household abroad and at home in a way no cloistered nun could have done. There was no monastic law to check her public usefulness, or to hinder her and her companion from setting forth in the heat and roses of a Roman June to accomplish a purpose she has set before herself. A gift



of jewels had been presented to the Convent by a noble matron of Rome as a thank-offering for the safe return of her husband from the War, and the Vestalis Maxima has decided to purchase household slaves with the gift to replace those advanced in years, who must be pensioned off until such time as they should conveniently die. The litters carry them across the Forum to the Street of the Goldsmiths to the shop of the Greek merchant, Demetrius, who had been warned of their coming. As they approached, a group of Court dandies was just leaving, in tunics and cloaks of Tyrrhean dye, the toga being long out of fashion among the gilded youth of Rome. One had bought a gold net for his hair, another pearls for his new mistress, another summer rings. They were practising their lately acquired knowledge of Greek on Demetrius, following the Hellenistic tendency of the age, Greek being all the fashion, and chaffing him on his prices. 'Thou wouldst rob the gods themselves, O Demetrius!' they were saying, but seeing his hieratical visitors approaching, the merry spendthrifts hushed their chatter and disappeared, Demetrius advanced to meet his important customers, the casket of jewels was opened and the jewels appraised. Demetrius did not 'rob the gods' on this occasion, rather, it may have been the other way, for Flavia Publicia was quite capable of striking a bargain for her community. As she passed out by the benches of the Greek craftsmen at work, Demetrius took up from one of them an ornament for the tunic beautifully modelled in the shape of an ear of corn. 'The symbol of Ceres,' said the Vestalis Maxima. 'Nay, gracious lady, it is the symbol of Isis. Our corn comes from Egypt as thou knowest and our gods too.' Her face clouded;—the old gods were being pushed out, and the parvenu gods ruled in their place,—Astarte, Mithra, Isis,—a whole heavenful of them. Demetrius saw his mistake, and quickly picked up another ornament, a bunch of grapes, cunningly fashioned out of amethysts. 'See, honoured lady, here is a god who will never be deposed. Bacchus will be remembered as long as Italy is the land of wine and song.' Flavia Publicia, recalling certain orgiastic rites connected with his name, was not altogether comforted, but her attention was distracted just then by the sight of a half-opened box full of charms or amulets in the shape of small silver crosses, 'Who would wear these?' she said with contempt; 'it is the symbol of a slave's death, fit only for malefactors and thieves. I remember there was a stir in Palestine over one long ago, which Tacitus tells of.' 'What was his name?' asked her companion. 'I have forgot,' said Flavia Publicia.

Taking her leave with the usual valediction, 'May Vesta guard thy hearth,' she and her companion passed out of the shop. Demetrius looked after them for a moment, then retiring into his private room, he drew one of the contemned crosses from beneath his tunic, put it reverently to his lips, and prayed, 'Forgive, O Christos, that I come to thee only by night.'—A second Nicodemus in the Forum at Rome, but with added terrors the first had never known.

The Vestals gave orders to be carried to the house of the slave merchant, Martellus, where in his garden on the Aventine seated under the marble colonnade, the slaves of all nationalities would be paraded before them. He, too, had been warned of their coming, and was waiting, all attention, to receive his august visitors. 'Thou wilt have good choice to-day, honoured lady, for Clodius Annus has gone bankrupt, and sells all his slaves, and Donna Plautilla is just dead, and her slaves also are in the market.' Martellus' house was a sort of Roman Registry office. If you required a butler, a bath-attendant, a scribe, you came to Martellus who gave you their qualifications and training, and their price. Some shining dark-skinned Nubians advanced for the buyer's inspection. 'I want no Ethiops,' said Flavia Publicia, waving them aside somewhat contemptuously, though a thousand years of sun had gone to make their colouring. 'Show me slaves from the North.' 'But, honoured lady, permit me to speak,—they do not stand the heat so well as these others.' 'Thou hast spoken,' said Flavia Publicia with cold finality, 'now show me slaves from Britain and Gaul.' Martellus saw his mistake,—slaves were a glut in the market just then, not only for the reasons given above, but because of a recent Triumph which had brought hundreds of captives to Rome in the train of the last victorious General. 'Here is one who will suit the gracious lady,' said Martellus, 'from Britain,' indicating a slave, rude and rugged of feature, like the Dying Gaul as we know him in the Capitol, who had been sitting dejectedly on a stone bench near by. 'He has been well trained,' Martellus continued, in answer to a question. 'I can answer for that. Clodius Annus was a hard task-master, he will not be regretted.' And he lifted a cloth which lay across the man's shoulders and showed the marks left by the scourge, not yet entirely healed. Flavia Publicia looked on without concern, slaves and their treatment roused no sympathy, the meaning of the word 'cruelty' being little understood in that age. 'We whip no slave in the House of the Vestals, but we brand runagates with the sacred fire,' she said. 'What is thy name?'

'Beowulf,' answered the slave. What interested the Vestalis Maxima was the fact that as the cloth lifted she had seen the same charm in the shape of a cross round the slave's neck, which she had seen in Demetrius' shop. 'I will take him,' she said, 'Britons make good slaves.' 'And here are two Gauls, trained in the household of the late Donna Plautilla, and equal to any service required of them, the pick of my collection!' said Martellus, crying up his wares. The Vestalis Maxima looked at the strongly-built muscular figures with approval;—the slaves must carry the litters up the hilly streets of Rome; they must bear the water-urns on their heads from the spring of Egeria to the Temple, for no mechanised water supply in pipes or conduits might be used in Vesta's service; and again the Vestalis Maxima remembered certain tumults, the noise of which had penetrated even into the Vestal's dwelling; doubtless the goddess would protect her own on these occasions, but it was as well to have a second line of defence. The bargain was struck, a heavy price paid for the accomplished Gauls and the Vestals departed, this time the formula 'May Vesta guard thy hearth' sounding somewhat ironical in face of all those northern 'hearthths' which Vesta had not guarded.

The Vestals returned in time for the midday ceremonies, and the noon siesta, after which Flavia Publicia was ready to receive the fashionable great ladies who came to visit the convent, some as penitents, some as patronesses, some to whitewash a damaged reputation. The state-rooms were never free from them, from the days of Livia downwards, the mother of Tiberius, well versed in poisons, who also dabbled in religion, and was so smitten with the charm of convent life, that she never rested until the Senate had bestowed upon her the title of *Vestalium Mater*, with permission to sit among the Vestals at public performances. At such times the great lady's conscience must often have led her to wish, but for Tiberius, that she had entered the Convent in her youth, in which case history could well have spared 'the prince of hypocrites.'

In these brief glimpses stolen from the past, it will be seen that an 'enclosed' life was never the lot of the Nuns of the Forum. Nor could Marcus Aurelius' injunction to 'live as on a mountain top' ever have been more than a counsel of perfection to those dwelling in that teeming valley crowded to the sky with temples, fanes, basilicas—the most mundane strip of earth ever found at sea-level!

In any case, Flavia Publicia is happier in her lot than the

Emperor. The face of the 'noblest pagan' as he sits upon his bronze horse upon the Capitol is sad, dissatisfied, almost querulous. We feel he is brooding over the fallen city, and is cognisant of her decline. But Flavia Publicia remains in a tranquil immunity at rest for ever. As we stand by her statue in the vacant atrium of her house, she, in her stony blindness, sees no desolation round her, no ruins stretching from hill to hill, with the isolated columns rising here and there like the masts of fated ships, derelict and slowly going to pieces on the quicksands of time. To her the dismantled walls are still covered with mosaic and marble in the hues of the peacock and pearl and sea-wave, and the prone columns are still erect against the sky. The temples still press and push and elbow each other in that narrow space, so thick they grow upon the ground, and over all is the pride and pomp of circumstance where we see only the poor pauper dress of weeds and lichen. Shall we rouse her from her stony sleep? Would we, if we could, break through that marble illusion, and shatter that impregnable repose? The beautiful lips seem to move in the lines attributed to another statue, serene in stone:

'Tis sweet to sleep, sweeter of stone to be,  
And while endure the infamy and woe,  
For me 'tis happiness not to feel or see,  
Do not awake me therefore, Ah! speak low.'

## JUNGLE VIGIL.

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL A. H. E. MOSSE, C.I.E.

'CHYEECE!'—That is how a well-known sporting writer puts on paper the midnight note of the jungle nightjar, a note that pre-eminently recalls the hours of night-watching in the Indian jungle. Let me try to describe one such night and, in so doing, avail myself of the writer's licence to draw on occasional memories of other nights, in order to fill in the details of the picture.

The centre piece of the scene is a pool of clear water in a gravelly river-bed, a tiny trickle at either end being the sole reminder of the rushing stream of a few months before. On our right, as we sit in our *machán* some five and twenty yards from the water's edge, is a rocky jungle-clad hill from whose slopes the jungle stretches away in our rear. In front across the stream lies the open plain and on it, two miles distant, is a village, surrounded by cultivation, the last of the cold-weather irrigation crop.

Crossing the plain towards the village, the rays of the setting sun upon them, may be seen a herd of the village cattle plodding towards the shelter of a thorn enclosure after their evening drink at our pool. In their leisurely movements as they drank had been no sign of consciousness of the fact that some cave in the hill above harbours the inveterate foe of their race, the tiger whose deadly onslaught, this very morning indeed, had reduced by one the number of the herd. This tragedy is the cause of our presence to-night. Half a mile away, where the cover is thickest at the base of the hill, there lies, very still, the thing that but yesterday was one of the finest young bullocks of the herd. The Tiger, be it mentioned in passing, is an excellent judge of beef and, unless famished, takes little interest in an old and worn-out steer. We are here to-night for revenge, though in truth with no very great hope of success. We should have much preferred a beat for the tiger by daylight, but the nature of his retreat has rendered that impracticable, while the thicket where he has bestowed his prey is such that to sit over the 'kill' is equally out of the question. Our only chance, then, is to watch by the pool to which, if he returns at all, he is almost certain to come to quench his after-

dinner thirst, and to hope, though with little expectation, that he may arrive before the moon goes down.

The brief twilight has gone. A succession of light clouds is passing across the face of the moon, from time to time dimming her reflection in the clear water below. Trying on veils she appears to be, womanlike, with a mirror before her, regardless of the great issues of life and death that may depend upon her whims. Though, womanlike again, it may be that her indifference is all pretence. Which is possibly a libel, alike on Woman and on the Moon. How is a mere man to know? He is only sure that he could not do without either of them.

A pariah dog in the village far away is baying at the moon; he evidently takes the libellous view. It is more than I can say whether the grasshoppers chirruping all around have an opinion in the matter. I do not believe that the cicada has any: he has spent I cannot tell you how many months, or it may be years, of a mysterious existence underground, in preparing for the unassailable position which he holds as champion ventriloquist of the world, and his one idea is to show us how deservedly he has earned the distinction. First we hear him from the tree-top above our head, then he seems to start singing in the little bush on our right but shortly transfers his monotonous refrain to the ground below. His only serious rival is the cornerake. But the cornerake dare not face him in open competition; he knows that he is dependent, for success in his own ventriloquial efforts, mainly upon his nimbleness of foot, while our cicada, all this time, has not moved an inch from that twig on the projecting branch to the left of the *machán*.

A ghostly shadow flits past and half a minute later, from a short way down the stream, arises a peculiar monologue of weird clucking and bubbling sounds. It is that uncanny bird the nightjar. We are wondering what has called forth his outburst of profanity—or does he think he is making music?—when we start at the sound of a faint footfall that seems to come from beneath our very tree. Twice is it repeated, light, but with amazing distinctness, as we hold our breath—can it be? And then a perfect scurry of tiny footsteps chuckles ‘sold again!’ as, half in relief, half in disgust that yet cannot but join in the laugh against ourselves, we realise that we have been listening to—the field-mice! Punchinello, the little spotted owlet, who has been sitting like a graven image upon an adjacent stump, bursts into shrieks of mirth and flies off to tell his mate the joke.



Presently two vague figures came lolloping by and, as one of them stops and sits up on its haunches close below our tree, before going on to the water, we recognise a hare. It is rather surprising to note how entirely indifferent he appears to the yapping that has started, not far off, of a trio of foxes—a performance which continues, with hardly a break, for the next hour or more; I have never known them so noisy before. It may be that the little grey fox of the Indian plains is not equal to tackling a full-grown hare, though the Indian hare is no bigger than a rabbit; but more probable that these foxes are not on hunting bent—I fancy there is a lady in the case—and the hare is somehow aware of the fact.

The opinion has been expressed by observant sportsmen that animals possess a sort of sixth sense which often enables them to recognise the presence or absence of a hostile intent in other animals, or even in man. A kind of telepathy may be the explanation. But we must leave the discussion of that for another time, for, with a droning boom, from out of the night there comes an aggressive winged something which forthwith smites us a hard and horny blow upon the cheek, and such abstractions as telepathy are straightway banished from our mind. Mumbling, in a quaint squeaky voice, what may or may not be an apology for not looking where he was going, a great rhinoceros-beetle sets about recovering the equilibrium which has been upset by the collision, and presently, after a couple of false starts, sets forth booming again into the night whence he came.

Rubbing our cheek, we remember the hares, and look, to find them gone. That is not altogether surprising. A moment before there has glided past, on wings of silence, a shadow vaster and more ghostly than the nightjar's. Telepathy is all very well, and even a panther is not always hungry; but the Indian hare which, after sundown, would trust for half a yard the great eagle owl of the jungle, has not learned the first lesson of jungle life.

Now something is moving among the bushes to the right of the pool, a hyæna perhaps; but no, the noise increases to a regular scuffling, and the next moment there is no doubt about the identity of the new-comers for, as the old nursery song has it of the old mother sow:

*'She waddled about saying "Umph! Umph! Umph!"  
And the little ones said "Wee! Wee!"'*

and, apparently careless of any possible danger, a sounder of pig

of assorted sizes, including half a dozen quite juvenile, make their way down to the brink of the pool. It is not long before, with a good deal of squeaking and grunting, they are gone in the direction of the cultivated lands. A pity they could not stay longer and that the light was not better to see them by, for, like most young things, the baby jungle porkers, which still wear the stripes bequeathed them by some distant ancestor, are attractive little creatures. It is a disappointment too that the old grey boar himself was not with his family to-night. Perhaps he will turn up later, and, if the tiger would only time his arrival at the same moment, there would be great possibilities in the situation! But not for us the experience of the fortunate sportsman who, sitting up for a tiger once upon a time, much as we are doing now, listened for a wonderful hour to the din and fury of a mighty battle until at length, the sounds of conflict ceased, the dawn light showed him a sight to stir the pulses. Like the Roman and the Tusculan of the old Lay: 'There they lay dead together, in a great lake of gore'—Tiger and Boar, the Jungle's 'Chiefs of Pride.' That must have been a fight worthy of Macaulay's pen!

Just where our particular tiger is at this moment we should very much like to know, for in another half-hour the moon will have sunk behind the hill and the pool be all in darkness. It is not difficult to guess the whereabouts of the old boar, as we listen to the distant shouts and cries from the nearest field of millet across the plain, where a Koli watchman, from his *machán* in the middle of his field, is striving—vain endeavour—to frighten away the pigs who are making high revel amid his crops. In the next field a little herd of blackbuck, from the open country beyond, is hardly less indifferent to the maledictions which he calls down upon their ancestors to the seventh generation! But it is the pigs that do the damage; the cost of their depredations to Indian Agriculture is estimated at crores of rupees in the year.

Still no tiger. There have been several false alarms; eyes and ears are beginning to feel the strain. Once our hopes were raised by the alarm calls of a herd of *chital*—the beautiful Spotted Deer of India—who, on their way to the pool, had presumably been held up by some scent of evil upon the wind. Now a porcupine comes wandering by, a beast of the night one rarely sees, though all over the jungle one finds he has paid his calls and dropped an occasional quill as a visiting card. His load of quills now, as he passes by, rustles like the wind in a field of ripening corn.

Soon after him comes the hyæna we had thought to hear earlier in the night. Clear is his ungainly outline, with its peculiar distinctive curve of the back, the flanks falling away behind; then, as he changes position, is all but invisible for a moment, such pranks does the moonlight play. The novice may sometimes waste a cartridge at night upon this ignoble beast, mistaking him for a panther. The old *shikari*, if he can see at all, will never make such an error. That curved outline and somewhat shuffling gait are, to the experienced eye, unmistakable, and in marked contrast to the long straight back and leisured velvet tread of the big cat. This hyæna hesitates about approaching the water and presently departs, his thirst unslaked, a fact which, for a few minutes, kindles a spark of dying hope. But the moon continues on her inexorable way and, as she disappears behind the crest of the sheltering hill, gradually plunges our tree and the pool below in deepest shadow.

Now may the tiger approach in safety if he will. We are not provided with one of those modern electric contrivances which at the same moment illumines the sights of the sportsman's rifle and the beast at which he shoots. So a long blast on a powerful whistle calls up our men and ponies as we prepare to descend from our roosting-place.

That tiger is still at large, for aught I know, but for me our vigil has been well worth while. And, as we emerge from the shadow of the hill into the moonlight once more, our steeds break into a lively trot, while the nightjar, who has long since ceased his noisy babbings of the dusk, sails overhead in a chastened mood and gives forth his pensive midnight call—'Chyeece!'

## LONG ODDS.

## VI. HONOUR.

BY RICHARD FITZGERALD FINDLAY.

THAT Saturday evening I was sitting in my room at the hotel, watching the sun go down behind Montaña Pelada. The bright colours of the sunset flamed in the clear summer sky, and at another time I should have been happy, sitting there smoking and thinking and watching their beauty fade gradually to a soft dove grey. But I was feeling lonely and depressed that night, partly, I think, because of the heat of the long days, but most of all because I could not help remembering the last time I was here in Barcelona and how different things were then. And I thought how foolish it was for people to come back to a place where they had once been happy with someone they loved and where around every corner ghosts of the past were waiting to mock them with sweet, sad memories. It is a bad thing to mind very much when things change and to be sentimental about the past, but either one is made like that or one is not, and that is all there is to it. For myself I am made like that and I minded like hell that things had changed, and instead of not being sentimental about the past I wanted to torture myself with it still further by going to the little café on the corner of the Plaza de Cataluna, where I had so often sat with Angela and drunk beer or manzanilla and watched the passers-by. I got up and went out of the room, not bothering to ring for the lift but walking down the stairs and past the porter's box and out into the street.

When I got to the café it was already pretty full. It was two years since I had last been there, but the place did not seem to have changed at all. The corner table on the edge of the pavement that had been Angela's favourite was vacant, and I sat down at it. After a few moments the waiter came out to take my order. It was the same waiter. He recognised me almost at once.

'Good evening, señor.' He seemed very pleased to see me, smiling all over his face.

'Good evening, Pedro.'

'You are keeping well?'

'Pretty well, thanks.'

'And the señorita? She is not with the señor?'

'No, she's not with me.'

'But she is well, I hope?' He was not smiling now.

'Yes, she's very well.' I had not seen or heard from her for a long time, but I felt that she was well. I felt that I should know somehow if she were not.

'That's good. That's very good,' Pedro said, smiling. 'But I am sorry she is not with the señor,' he added.

Oh, go to hell, I thought. But I did not want to hurt his feelings, so I did not say anything. He had been quite a friend in the old days, and now he was a link with the past.

'The señor will drink beer?' he asked.

'No, not beer; manzanilla,' I said. I had intended to drink beer, but I thought now that I would drink manzanilla. It was stronger.

In a minute or two Pedro came back with the *chato* or short glass of manzanilla in a saucer. He put it down on the table with a lot of little plates of sausage and sardines and anchovies, and olives stuffed with anchovies, and almonds and tuna and smoked ham.

'Thanks, Pedro,' I said. He did not seem to be in a hurry to go away.

'The señor will go to the bull-fight to-morrow, of course?'

'No,' I said, 'I don't care for bull-fights any more.' He looked at me for a moment, but he did not say anything else. He went away.

I drank some manzanilla and lit a cigarette. From where I was sitting I could see the illuminated sign on Thomas Cook's office shining through the dusk across the square. I thought of going there with Angela to book our cabins on the boat for Palma de Mallorca, and of getting off the boat very early in the morning and having breakfast outside a café in the town with the sun already as hot as at noon in England in midsummer. And I thought of driving across the island in the hotel 'bus, with the windmills beside the road, and the steep twisting road through the mountains, up and down to Pollensa and then up and down again, and then the hotel at Formentor and bathing and lying in the sun on the hot, white sand with Angela and walking in the gardens with Angela in the still, warm nights, with the moon and the mooring lights of a white yacht reflected in the waters of the little bay and one of the sailors on the landing-stage singing a song to a guitar. Well, all that was

finished now, and the only thing to do was to hope that in the end those memories would fade. So far they had shown no signs of fading, and had even seemed to grow clearer as the days and the weeks and the months went by, but no doubt, I thought, they will fade, in the end. Yes, yes, I thought, they will be bound to fade all right, in the end.

I had finished my manzanilla now and was feeling a little less depressed. I called Pedro and ordered another and by the time I had drunk it I found that I could think of Angela without much pain. That ache of longing was still there, but the sharp edge had gone from it. One more, I thought, and I might be almost happy. I turned around to try and catch Pedro's eye and saw a tall man in a light grey suit and a grey fedora standing with his hand on the back of the vacant chair on the other side of the table. When he saw me looking at him he bowed slightly and lifted his hat a little.

'You permit me, señor?' he said in Spanish.

'Of course,' I said. There did not appear to be another vacant seat, anyway. He sat down. A shoe-black came up and wanted to clean my shoes. 'All right,' I said, stretching out a foot.

The man on the other side of the table had unfolded a copy of *La Fiesta Brava* and was reading it. I looked at his face. It was strangely familiar, but I could not place it at first. And then as I looked at him I saw the Madrid bull-ring on a blazing Sunday afternoon in July, with a thunder-storm brewing, and sudden gusts of hot wind coming sometimes into the scorching stillness, and a tall man going in to kill, leaning well in over the horn and crossing with the *muleta* in his left hand, and a sudden gust of wind blowing the *muleta* towards his body, and the bull's head lifting and the tall man on the bull's head with the right horn out of sight in his thigh, tossed twice and still on the horn, and then on the ground, the bull's head lowered to gore again and men running in with flapping capes to draw the bull away from the prostrate figure, and bull-ring servants picking him up and running with him towards the infirmary. I knew who the man was now, all right. He was <sup>El</sup>Alonso Caballero, the matador.

The shoe-black had finished my left shoe now, so I shifted around in my seat and gave him my other foot. Then I looked at Caballero's face again, seeing its stillness and its expression of absolute and rather terrible detachment, the detachment of a man who deals in death every day and knows every day that there is a chance of receiving it; which marks all matadors quite early in their careers,



strongly or lightly according to the power or weakness of their imaginations, but always marks them ; which you can see on their faces before a fight and which sometimes, especially when they have been gored badly a few times in the course of some years in the ring, and when the bull-fight season is well advanced, they wear all the time ; and I knew that, even if I had never seen this man Alonso Caballero before, I should have known that he was a matador.

A little cold breeze came suddenly down the street, from the north, perhaps, from above the snow-line of the Pyrenees. It just stirred the hair at the back of my head, and was gone. I saw Caballero shiver. And then he put his paper down and started to cough. He took a large white black-monogrammed silk handkerchief out of his pocket and went on coughing, a hard, dry cough that seemed to tear his long, slender body to pieces. I saw the veins and tendons standing out on the thin, strong, sun-burned hand holding the handkerchief to his mouth, and the veins standing out on the temples of his lean, dark, sun-burned face, and beads of sweat on his forehead. I thought that he was never going to stop coughing, and so did some of the other people in the café too, by the way they turned around and looked at our table. Two or three of them must have recognised him in spite of the handkerchief, and I saw them nudge one another. After a while he stopped coughing and took the handkerchief away from his mouth. He glanced at it for a moment and then put it back in his pocket. But I saw his expression when he took the handkerchief away from his mouth, and just before he glanced at it. He did not look detached or still just then, not just then. He looked frightened.

His face was a little flushed now, under the tan. He looked very sombre, very still, very detached, and rather sad, too, I thought, sitting there staring straight ahead of him across the street. Perhaps it was because of that underlying sadness, or because of that frightened look, or because I had drunk two *chatos* of manzanilla and was still lonely and wanted to talk to somebody, or perhaps because of all these things, but I leant across the table and spoke to him.

'That's a nasty cough you've got,' I said. He turned his head and looked at me. His eyes were red-brown and fiery.

'It's nothing,' he said. 'Just a little cough.'

I thought of fighting in the bull-ring in a heavy, gold-brocaded coat, in the late summer and autumn, when in some parts of Spain

it is so hot at the beginning of the fight that sitting in the sun without a hat you would get sunstroke, and then the cold coming quickly towards the end of the fight and having to stand in the ring, with the sweat drying on you, ready to help but perhaps not having much to do, while the other two matadors kill their last bulls. And I thought of the dust of the ring in a man's lungs, and of the fatigue of fighting every day, and of having to leave the ring after the fight and change your clothes quickly and get into a crowded motor-car with your *cuadrilla*, or team of picadors and *banderilleros*, and drive perhaps four or five hundred miles to the town where your next fight is, with only just time to bath and shave and get a little sleep before you have to dress and go into the ring again.

It took only a very few seconds for these thoughts to go through my mind. I looked at Caballero.

'Yes,' I said. 'Just so.' I saw Pedro dodging about amongst the tables with a tray in his hand. He looked my way and I beckoned to him.

'Don Alonso Caballero,' I said, 'I have seen you fight many times. I am, if I may say so, a great admirer of your skill. You will do me the honour of drinking a *chato* of manzanilla with me?'

Perhaps those red-brown eyes of his saw that I, too, was unhappy. He agreed, anyway. We started to talk, or rather I did most of the talking at first and he just answered in monosyllables. But during the second manzanilla he loosened up a lot. We talked about bull-fighting. I think he was pleased to find a foreigner who did not see the bull-fight as a series of incidents, some of them puzzling, maybe, but rather fascinating, and the rest disgusting and extremely messy, but who saw it whole, the art and the grandeur and the tragedy of it. At any rate he had never talked to one before, and he got quite animated. We talked of Belmonte and Joselito and Gallo and Maera, and Chicuelo and Cagancho, and Gitanillo de Triana who died a lingering, agonising death from horn wounds in 1931. I asked him to come and have dinner with me and he said he would. We had another manzanilla and then I paid the bill and we left the café and walked across the Plaza de Cataluna and into the hotel. On the way I told him about being there in December, 1930, and seeing a mob of syndicalists overturning a tramcar in an anti-royalist demonstration, and then the Guardia Civil coming along and starting to shoot. It turned out that he was an ardent monarchist, like I was. He had no time for the Republic, he said, no time at all. We were more friendly than ever after that.

I ordered dinner in my room, with a bottle of white Valdepenas. I thought that it would be cooler up there than in the dining-room. We went on talking about bull-fighting. We talked of Luis Freg and Felix Rodriguez and Fortuna and Aguero and Varelito and the Bienvenida brothers and Zurito, who was always fainting in the ring, and Barrera and Manolo Martinez and the brave but awkward Nicanor Villalta and the skilful and masterly Marcial Lalanda. We talked of a lot more, too, who were just names to me, whom I had never seen and some of whom I had heard very little about. Towards the end of dinner Caballero had another fit of coughing, but it did not last very long and he turned his head away from the table so that I could not see his face. He did not comment on it at all, and neither did I. I rang the bell and ordered another bottle of Valdepenas. Then I went to the telephone and told the porter to try to get me a *barrera* seat for the bull-fight to-morrow, as close as possible to the place where the sword-handlers stand and where the bull-fighters hang their capes over the red wooden barrier. He said that it would cost me a good deal of money. I told him that that was all right, and that he had to get me a seat if it meant ringing up every agent and ticket speculator in the town. Earlier in the evening nothing would have induced me to go to the bull-fight, but now there was only one thing in the whole world that I wanted more than to go to it. But I knew that I must not think too much about that other thing, so I went back to the table and drank a glass of wine and started talking to Caballero again.

'Don Geraldo,' he said suddenly, at some point or other in the course of the evening, and while we were drinking the third bottle of Valdepenas, 'have you ever been in love?' I was rather surprised when he said this, because I had been wondering the same thing about him for a long time. I think perhaps that when you are in love you cannot help wondering whether other people you meet are in love too, and how it is with them, and I would have asked him this question much earlier if it had not been for that cough. I had not liked to talk to him about love, thinking of that cough. And now here he was, bringing the subject up himself.

'Why, yes, I have,' I said. He nodded slowly several times.

'And it is going well with you?'

'No, not so well,' I said.

'I'm sorry. I'm very sorry indeed to hear that.' He smiled at me. It was a very sad smile. 'But you must hope,' he went on.

Yes, I could always hope, I thought. To go on living at all one had to hope.

'Yes, I do,' I said.

'Don Geraldo, do you know what it is to be a young matador, and fairly successful?' I knew what it was. I had spent enough time in Spain to know that. Women flocking round like moths round a lighted window at night. I nodded.

'I used to like all that once, when I was young,' Caballero said. He had told me that he was twenty-nine. That did not seem old to me, but then I had not been a full matador for ten years, and I had not got that cough. I waited for him to go on, but he just sat looking out of the window. After a while I thought that I would say something, to help the conversation along a little.

'Don't you like it any more?' I asked.

'No, not now. I'm in love, too.' I racked my brains for something to say. I could not think of anything.

'She follows me around. I haven't told her,' Caballero said. He looked at me.

'That cough. Do you think it's very bad?'

'No. Oh, no. You need a rest, I expect, that's all. You'll be all right.' I wished he would not look at me quite so hard.

'No. You just say that. It's very bad.'

'Have a drink.'

'Listen, Don Geraldo, do you know what I do? Every day when I am fighting I go to the chapel before the fight and I say, "Blessed Virgin, let me die in the ring to-day. Oh, Blessed Virgin, don't let this cough kill me; let me make a brilliant *faena* and die in the ring to-day." But She doesn't hear me; She doesn't hear me.'

'Have a drink.'

'All right, I'll have a drink. I like you, Don Geraldo; you're a good friend.'

'To your happiness.'

'Well, if you say so. I thank you; I thank you very much.' We drained our glasses. I filled them up again.

'To your girl.'

'She just follows me around. I haven't told her. Her name is Concepcion.'

'Concepcion. That's a lovely name. To Doña Concepcion.'

'I thank you, Don Geraldo; I thank you very much. To Doña Concepcion.'

The clocks of Barcelona started to chime midnight. The bottle of Valdepenas was empty. I wanted to order another, but Caballero said that he had to go. We took the lift down to the ground floor. The porter called to me as we passed his box. 'I'll have a ticket for you in the morning, Mister Saxby; a *barrera* seat,' he said. I was pleased about that. The street was still filled with people sauntering about. Above the clanging of the tramcars the sound of music came from a café across the square. Caballero raised his hand and a passing taxi stopped against the kerb.

'You've been very kind, Don Geraldo,' he said, shaking my hand. His own hand was rather hot and dry, I noticed.

'It's you who've been kind. I shall see you to-morrow, I hope, at the sorting of the bulls.'

'You will be there? I shall look out for you.' He hesitated for a moment.

'Perhaps, after all, it's just a little cough.' Oh, God, don't look at me like that, I thought.

'Yes, of course. That's all it is. Just a little cough. You'll be all right.'

'Adios.'

'Adios.'

He waved to me as the taxi drove away. I went up to my room, and put my shoes and the empty bottles outside the door and shut it. Then I went and looked out of the window at the full moon hanging low in the clear sky and at the lights twinkling on the low hills behind the town. It would be very hot again to-morrow, I thought. After I had undressed I got into bed and lay there in the hot night with the moonlight shining through the curtains and just a sheet over me and thought of a lot of things. It was a long time before I went to sleep.

When I got to the bull-ring the next morning to watch the bulls sorted it was about half-past twelve. There were not very many people there, looking down over the high fences into the corrals. The five-peseta cost of admission to the sorting had kept the numbers of spectators down all right. It usually does. I saw Caballero talking to two or three people who were all smoking cigars. One of them, a tall, heavily built man with a large hooked nose and small, deep-set black eyes, was the matador Alvaro Gandalla. The small, dried-up-looking oldish man with the humorous expression, I thought was probably Caballero's confidential *banderillero*, but I was not sure. Caballero's face was very still and detached. The third

matador who was to fight that afternoon was standing a few yards away, surrounded by a group of admiring friends. He was Niceto Barrios, called Niño de Aranjuez, whom I had seen fighting once in Sevilla two years before as a *novillero* or apprentice matador and who had only become a full matador during the present season. He was only twenty-one and would have looked even younger with his delicate, rather effeminate face if he had not also looked somewhat dissipated. He was laughing all the time and whatever he thought, standing there looking at the bulls, he did not show it.

Caballero had not seen that I was there, so I turned around to watch the sorting. The bulls had been divided up into lots of two bulls each by common consent of the confidential *banderilleros* of the three matadors, and the lots drawn for, earlier that morning, and now it only remained to separate them into the individual pens, where they would rest until they came out into the ring in the order in which the matadors had decided to fight them. They were being herded through the swing doors and runways and trap-doors into the individual pens by trained steers. All the bulls were very big and fierce-looking, with wide horns, and there seemed to be a certain amount of trouble about getting them to go where they ought to go. 'Huh! toro, Huh! toro. Huh! Huh! Huh!' the herders kept calling out, and so did one of the spectators who appeared to be rather drunk. But the bulls did not take any notice of him. They knew he was drunk. In the middle of all this somebody came up behind me and put his hand on my shoulder. It was Caballero. We shook hands. He looked as though he had slept very badly, or perhaps he always looks like this in daylight, I thought. There were dark, somehow transparent shadows under his fiery red-brown eyes, and I saw the dull flush under the sunburn on his cheeks, where the cheek-bones showed clearly through the tightly stretched skin.

'Big bulls,' I said.

'Yes. Miura bulls.'

'Difficult bulls.'

'Yes. They learn quickly in the ring.' There was something strange about him this morning, something more than that almost inhuman detachment, although that was more noticeable than it had been last night. Underneath that outward stillness some unguessed-at force seemed to be stirring, like the currents far down below the surface of a deep, glassy sea. My imagination's running away with me, I thought. I had not slept very well, myself.



'Who are those two fellows over there? They don't seem to like the look of the bulls,' I said.

'They're my two picadors. They don't like it when the bulls are big.'

Well, I did not blame them. I should not like it when the bulls were big, either, if I had to sit on a horse and watch them charge me. There was one very large black bull below us in the corral, with a huge hump of muscle behind his neck.

'That's a hell of a bull,' I said.

'Yes, I've drawn that bull. I shall take him last.' He said that just as he had said everything else, without emotion, but for some reason those words had for me a fatal sound. I turned and looked at him, thinking, Surely I shall see in his face that he has decided to let himself be gored to death by that last bull, that black, fatal bull. But I could not see that in his face. It was calm, still, withdrawn and a little sad. I felt better when I saw his face.

The sorting was finished now. There did not seem to be any point in staying any longer. I would have liked to ask Caballero to have lunch with me, but whatever it was that I imagined there was strange about him prevented me from asking him. I felt that he would refuse, anyway.

'I'll see you after the fight,' I said.

'Yes, after the fight.' He was smiling at me.

'Good luck,' I said.

'I thank you, Don Geraldo; I thank you very much. *Adios.*'

'Adios.'

I went back to the hotel and had some lunch. Then I went up to my room and sat down in an armchair by the window and tried to read the papers. But I could not concentrate. I was too restless to concentrate. After a while I went downstairs and out into the street and started to walk northwards. It was pretty hot and I did not walk very fast. I passed through the Plaza del Rey and found myself outside the door of the cathedral. More with the idea of getting out of the sun than anything else I went inside. I walked up one of the aisles in the cool, incense-scented semi-darkness and sat down in a chair. I watched the people moving slowly about in the dim silence and the beauty of the sunlight streaming through the stained-glass windows and making bright patches of colour on the worn, stone-flagged floor. I thought of Angela and Alonso Caballero and Doña Concepcion. I wondered

what sort of a girl it would be that Caballero would love. A gallant girl like Angela, I expect, I thought, but I did not know why I thought that. I wondered how Angela was. She must be all right, I thought, or I should know. An old woman was kneeling a few feet away with her fingers moving quickly over the rosary around her neck. I got up and went to one of the little side chapels and put a peseta in the box and took a candle from another box and lighted it. I knelt down in front of the small altar and said a prayer for Angela. I do not know what I said, but it seemed to help a lot. Then I thought of Caballero and Doña Concepcion again and I went and put two more pesetas in the box and lighted two more candles and said prayers for them both. After that I walked out of the cathedral feeling clean inside and much happier and took a taxi back to the hotel and had some tea.

It was about a quarter past five when I got to the bull-ring. The porter had got me a very good seat, a *barrera* or front-row seat, close to the middle of the shade. I was glad that I had not got to sit in the sun in the heat of that afternoon. Usually I liked to go into the *patio de caballos* before the fight, and look at the lines of horses standing against the wall of the courtyard, and at the matadors and *banderilleros* talking together in a group, and watch the picadors arriving on the horses they had ridden in from their lodgings in the town. But to-day I did not want to go there. I hired a cushion from the cushion-vendor in the narrow passageway or *callejon* below me and sat down and looked out across the ring at the crowd moving about in the *patio*, without feeling any desire to do anything but wait quietly for the bull-fight to start. Sometimes I turned around in my seat and looked through my field-glasses at the women in white lace mantillas and brightly coloured shawls fluttering their fans in the boxes high up at the back of the ring, and amused myself wondering who they were and how many of them had come to see rather than to be seen. And then I would turn back again and look at the sword-handlers in the *callejon* below, with their sponges and jugs of water and the piles of folded scarlet serge *muletas* and the swords in their soft-leather scabbards and the heavy pink percale fighting capes hanging over the barrier. Watching all these things, and listening to the sellers of iced beer and soft drinks and pastries and peanuts and iced fruits shouting their wares above the noise of the band playing a tango tune, and occasionally glancing at my wrist-watch, I waited for the bull-fight to begin. I was impatient for it to begin, and because of this, I

suppose, the time seemed to go very slowly. But at last the crowd started to grow less in the *patio de caballos* and I saw the three matadors standing in the doorway with the sun glinting on their gold-brocaded suits and their *cuadrillas* forming up behind them. People around me began to turn their heads towards one of the boxes and then clapping broke out all around the ring. It was the president coming in. He sat down and a few moments later I saw him wave his handkerchief.

The trumpet sounded and the two mounted bailiffs galloped across the ring from the doorway of the *patio*, took off their hats and bowed to the president, and galloped back to their places in the parade. The band struck up the Toreador song from Carmen and the parade started. There it all was again, the three matadors striding loose-hipped across the sand, their dress capes furled tightly around their left arms, each with his team of *banderilleros* and mounted picadors in single file behind him; Caballero on the left looking very tall and fine-drawn beside the bulk of Gandalla and the smallness and apparent frailty of Niño de Aranjuez; the mounted bailiffs in sixteenth-century costumes and the brightly caparisoned triple mule-team; gold and silver and black and white and scarlet, blue, cloudless sky and hot, white sunlight and jet-black, moving shadows on the sand. Yes, there it all was again, that ancient pageantry, but watching Caballero I thought that it had this afternoon a greater significance, an added splendour. I do not know what it was that made me think that.

When they came in front of the president's box all the men removed their hats and gave him a low bow. Then they settled their hats back on their heads and came up to the barrier. The matadors and *banderilleros* climbed over into the *callejon* and removed their dress capes and began to pass them to friends to hang over the wall between the *barrera* seats and the *callejon* in front of them. A sword-handler took Niño de Aranjuez' cape and began to carry it up towards one of the boxes, probably to give it to a woman admirer up there, I thought. Somebody called my name and when I looked down I saw Caballero standing in the *callejon* holding his cape up to me. He had a faint, sad smile on his face when I took it from him. Neither of us said anything. It did not seem necessary to say anything. He turned away and took one of the rose-coloured percale fighting capes from the barrier and climbed over into the ring. He was the senior matador there that day, so he had to kill the first bull. He got behind one of the

plank shelters built out from the barrier and waited for the bull to come out of the *toril*.

The bull-ring servants had finished smoothing out the sand by now. The two bailiffs rode up below the president's box to ask him for the key of the *toril*. He threw it down and one of the bailiffs caught it neatly in his plumed hat. The crowd clapped loudly. The bailiff galloped across the ring and gave the key to the man standing by the door of the *toril*. Then he galloped back again, saluted the president, and galloped out through the door of the *patio de caballos*. The door of the *patio* shut. The bull-ring servants smoothed away the hoof-prints again and climbed into the *callejon*. Everything was suddenly very still. The president waved his handkerchief. The trumpet blew for the first act to begin. The man by the red plank door of the *toril* unlocked it and ran backwards, hiding himself behind it as it swung back against the fence. For a moment you could see only a low passageway where the door had been and then something reddish coloured flashed in the mouth of the passageway and a big roan bull charged out into the ring.

A few yards from the *toril* he slithered to a standstill, his feet kicking up the sand, his great head with the wide horns held high, looking about him at the apparently empty ring. A *banderillero* who had been standing close against the fence on the far side raced across in front of him, trailing a cape which he was holding in his right hand. The bull lowered his head and started after the man, driving with his right horn at the cape. He charged quite straight, I noticed, following the cape, not trying to cut off ground towards the man. Caballero was still standing behind the *burladero*, aloof and still, his eyes on the bull, watching to see which horn he preferred to use. The *banderillero* turned and the end of the cape swirled outwards as it trailed along the ground. The bull followed, driving at it with his right horn. They would have to correct that tendency to hook to the right, I thought, or it would not be so good when the time came for the killing.

Caballero came out from behind the *burladero* and strode out towards the bull, holding his cape in his two hands. My heart began to beat very fast and I had to force myself to keep on looking at him as he walked out there. I was very afraid of what he might be going to do. He cited the bull from in front and stood quite still with his feet together when he charged, moving the cape slowly ahead of his horns, bringing him past his body so close that it made

me feel quite sick, thinking that that right horn must catch him ; turning as the bull turned and recharged and bringing him past as close again on the other side, and then again, and then again, three more times with those beautiful *veronicas*, and then the sixth time as the horn scraped past his stomach, gathering the cape towards him in a *media-veronica* so that it wrapped itself around his body, its end flicking out of sight of the bull's eyes so that he stopped in mid-gallop, not seeing anything to charge any more ; and then turning his back on the bull and walking away. The crowd clapped and roared with excitement. I took out my handkerchief and mopped the sweat from my face. I did not see how I was going to stand watching this fight.

One of the picadors was coming out on his horse, his long lance or pic in his right hand. Gandalla and Niño de Aranjuez climbed over the barrier into the ring and stood in a line with Caballero on the left of the horse and rider, ready to help if necessary. The horse had obviously been in the ring before, and scenting the bull was almost unmanageable, plunging and trying to back away. A bull-ring servant seized him by the bridle and dragged him forward. I hated to see that. It is difficult if you love horses not to hate seeing them in the ring, and the only thing to do is to realise that their careers are finished, anyway, before you see them in the ring, when they are sold to go there, and to accept their presence as an essential part of the formal, established ritual of the bull-fight. The horse had a thick, mattress-like covering protecting his belly. It was Primo de Rivera who introduced that covering, to please the foreigners, but it was better for the horses before he introduced it. It was better for the picadors too, but you may say that that is neither here nor there. They get paid for what they do, but not much, and since they get concussion and broken arms and legs and fractured skulls more often than they used to they probably would not agree. As for the horses, before the covering came in they were usually killed by the bulls, or by a stroke of the *puntilla* if they were badly hurt, and all was over for them in the five minutes of that first act. Now they are not killed so often, but they still get a lot of pain. The spectators' feelings are spared, but not the horses' ; they get pain always, but not always death, and then they are offered by the horse contractors again and again as long as they can stand up until one day, perhaps, they are lucky and die in the ring.

Now the bull was charging that poor old, worn-out, shapeless,



blindfolded horse down there. Just before he reached it the picador placed the point of the pic in the swelling hump of muscle behind his head, leaning well forward on the pic as the point went home. There was a thud as the lowered horns hit the mattress-covering and then horse and man were up in the air, the man still leaning forward on his pic, and then the horse crashing over sideways to the sand and the picador coming out of his saddle with the pic still under his right arm and falling too, just clear of the horse, and the crowd applauding the bravery of the bull and figures running in to draw the bull away from the fallen horse and man. Caballero got there first and swung his cape in front of the bull's horns, running backwards, drawing him out and away towards the centre of the ring, passing him again with another series of *veronicas*, not quite so close this time because the bull was learning quickly, looking for the man instead of the cape, but still terribly close; forcing the bull to follow the cape by some magical movement of arms and wrists, and then finishing with another *media-veronica* and walking away again.

When I looked back at the fallen horse I saw that he was dead. A red-bloused bull-ring servant, *monosabios* they call them, was just straightening up with a broad-headed knife in his hand. There was blood on the knife where it had pierced the base of the horse's skull, between the vertebrae, and the sand, too, was stained with blood. Blood and sand, I thought, feeling strangely sad as I looked at the dead horse. But I was glad that he was dead.

The bull was standing where Caballero had placed him, looking at the second horse. I saw his ears twitch and the hump of muscle in his neck rise in a crest and then his tail lifted and he charged. This picador was much more skilful than the other, and placed the pic, sinking it well home in the top of the hump of muscle, while the bull was still some feet away, leaning forward, holding the bull off, the horse moving sideways as the bull pushed hard against the pic; then the bull swerving to get rid of the pic and charging again, this time reaching the horse in spite of the pic but only able to lift the horse's forelegs off the ground a little way because of the picador's skill with it; not able to get the horn because of the mattress-covering and at last lowering his head to drop the horse's forefeet back on the ground; Gandalla running in to make the *quite*, drawing the bull away towards the centre of the ring, passing him with the same series of passes as Caballero, but at arms' length, not nearly so moving; the bull charging less fast but more dangerously now,



trying to hook with his right horn ; myself thinking that Gandalla was right not to pass him very close, not wanting to be gored, not having that cough that Caballero had ; and then the trumpet sounding as the president gave the signal for the second act.

The picadors left the ring ; the horses, too, except that dead horse lying there under a sheet of canvas. Caballero walked out towards the bull with the two slender, barb-pointed *banderillas* in his hands. When the bull charged he stood quite still, waiting for him. He was going to be gored this time, all right. As the bull reached him and lowered his head to hook he lifted his right foot, swaying his body to the left, then as the bull swerved a little to follow the lure of his body, swayed back again, his right foot back on the ground, and raising his arms out straight, standing on his toes now, sank the *banderillas* close together into the hide over the bull's withers, the bull hurtling past so close that the left horn brushed his hip, the *banderillas* hanging down on either side and making a clacking sound as he charged on towards the barrier. This is hell, I thought, feeling afraid and yet exalted while I thought that. The man next to me said something in Spanish which I could not catch above the shouting of the crowd. I looked round at him. He was very dark, with one of those blue faces.

'What's that ?' I said. He leaned towards me.

'Like Maera. He's as good as Maera.'

'Yes.' Maera was long since dead.

'Very brave. Takes a lot of chances, though.'

'Yes.' Well, so did Maera, I thought, but the bulls never killed him. It was T.B. that killed him.

The bull had taken up his *querencia*, that is, the place where he felt most comfortable, near the barrier, close to the dead horse, facing out into the ring. He felt more confident there, where he had won his first victory, where he could smell the blood. His tempo was slower now, and the pics and the effort of lifting the horses had tired his neck muscles so that he carried his head lower. He was at bay ; more dangerous than ever ; aiming each horn stroke carefully, aiming to kill. Niño de Aranjuez came in from the middle of the ring to draw him out with his cape. He came out without much difficulty ; he was a very brave bull. One of the *banderilleros* placed the second pair of *banderillas*, running in from the left in a quarter-circle across the line of the bull's charge and sinking them with his feet together as he passed the horns. It was very good work, but it left me quite cold, somehow, after

Caballero. It seemed dull after him. Another *banderillero* placed the third pair, from the right this time. That was good work, too, but it left me quite cold. I was glad when the trumpet blew for the third act.

Caballero took the *muleta* and the sword from his sword-handler and came along the barrier to below the president's box. He took off his hat and held it up in the customary salute. His face was wet and shining with sweat and his fiery eyes looked brighter and more deep-sunken and his cheek-bones more prominent than ever, I thought, watching him as he dedicated the bull to the president.

'To you, Don Largo de los Rios, I dedicate this bull,' he said. His eyes moved for a moment along the line of boxes. He seemed to be looking for someone, but I could not say whether whoever it was was there or not. The stern stillness of his face did not change at all. I knew who it was that he was looking for. He threw his hat on the ground and took the sword in his right hand and walked out towards the bull.

The bull had gone back to his *querencia* after the last pair of *banderillas* had been placed, but during the dedication the *banderilleros* had drawn him out with their capes so that he was now perhaps fifteen yards from the barrier, half-way to the centre of the ring. Caballero stopped a few yards away and stood facing him, his feet together, the scarlet serge *muleta* draped over its stick in his left hand, his left arm hanging loosely at his side. The bull stood stock-still, looking at him. Caballero lifted his left arm out from his side a little and swayed the *muleta* forward towards the bull. Without any warning the bull's tail lifted and he charged, Caballero standing like a statue as he came towards him, then swinging the *muleta* just ahead of the horns, his body following the curve of the charge, the horns level with his chest, pivoting on his feet in a quarter-circle with the bull; giving a final flick with the bottom end of the *muleta* to cut off his charge and stop him; citing him twice more to charge and passing him with two more *natural* passes, beautiful with an emotional and spiritual beauty, and then the bull not stopping after the third charge but turning quickly and coming in fast from behind and Caballero turning and swinging the *muleta* forward to get rid of him with a chest pass, and a thud as the flat of the right horn caught him in the chest and knocked him over, and the sand settling again and *banderilleros* running in with capes to protect the fallen man.

A sudden hush had fallen on the ring. I could hear my heart beating. It sounded so loud that I felt that everybody else must be able to hear it, too. I did not take my eyes off Caballero. It seemed a long time before he started to get up, though it was probably not more than four or five seconds. He got up rather slowly, still holding the *muleta* in his left hand. He put that hand on his heart for a moment. Then he bent down and picked up the sword. The crowd yelled and clapped.

The man next to me leaned over.

'I've never seen anything finer. But he won't live long. He works too close to the bull,' he said.

'You think so?' I answered.

'Perhaps he's tired of life,' the man said with a grim smile. Yes, yes, he is, you fool, but you don't understand, I thought. And suddenly I knew that however much Caballero wanted to die he was not deliberately seeking death down there in the ring this afternoon. If death came to him, well and good, but he would not seek it. He had too much honour for that. Yes, that's what it is; he's all honour, I thought.

The bull was back in his *querencia* again. Caballero went towards him, citing him with the *muleta* to draw him out. But the bull was more on the defensive now and would not come. Caballero strode in closer, dropping the *muleta* under his muzzle and then withdrawing it quickly, stepping back a pace, exposing his body to give the bull confidence. The bull came out with a rush and a great clatter of *banderillas* and Caballero passed him with a *natural* pass, winding him around his body like a belt and then stopping him with that final flick of the scarlet cloth. He did this once more and then he had the bull where he wanted him, his left flank to the barrier, his *querencia* ahead and to the right. Standing about five yards in front of him he fixed him in position with two low passes of the *muleta*, so that he was square on his four feet, his front feet close together. He raised the *muleta*, and you could see the bull's eyes follow it. Then he lowered the *muleta* and put the sword, too, in his left hand. He turned so that he was standing profiled towards the bull, furled the *muleta* over its stick with a twist of his left wrist, lifted the sword from the cloth with his right hand to the level of his chest and sighted along it at that spot high up between the bull's shoulders where it should go in for a clean, quick kill. He drew himself upright and started in at the bull, and then all you saw was the bull begin to charge, and the swing

of the *muleta* as Caballero crossed with it to guide the bull out to the right of his body, leaning right in over the horns to put the sword in and then coming out along the bull's left flank, the bull going on a yard or so towards his *querencia* with the red-flannel-wrapped swordhilt sticking out between his shoulders and then sagging to his knees, rolling over sideways and not moving any more.

'A brilliant *faena*,' the blue-faced man shouted above the roar of the crowd. I did not say anything. I watched Caballero pull out the sword from the dead bull, straighten up and walk towards the barrier. His lips were grey tinged under the sweat, perhaps with dust, I thought. The mule team galloped into the ring to drag out the dead bull and the dead horse. The crowd clapped the dead bull as he was drawn out of the ring. He had been very brave.

The sword-handler was wiping the sword with a damp sponge before drying it and putting it back in its sheath. I realised suddenly that my mouth was very dry. I bought a bottle of iced beer from a vendor below me in the *callejon* and started to drink it.

I do not remember much about the next half-hour or so, while Gandalla and Niño de Aranjuez killed their first bulls. I remember that Niño de Aranjuez' bull took up his *querencia* close to the door of the *toril* and would not leave it, and that one of the *banderilleros*, going in to draw him out with a cape, was caught and tossed and carried off to the hospital, with a *cornada* in his right thigh. I remember the times when Caballero was in the ring to help with his cape; it was always exciting when he was in the ring. But the rest of the fights I do not remember at all. I just sat there and looked at the ring without really seeing what was going on and waited for that huge, black bull.

I glanced down at my watch. It was eight minutes since the bull had come into the ring, but he showed no signs of tiring. He seemed to have all the fierceness and strength of the Miura breed as well as the wind and stamina of bulls from the ranch of Don José Palha of Portugal, where, they say, the grown bulls have to go eight miles from their pasture to water. Caballero had passed him with a series of *veronicas* so close that once the right horn had ripped the gold lace from his right thigh. After that he had killed two horses, lifting them bodily and crashing them against the barrier so that one picador fell over into the *callejon* and was carried out with bad concussion and the other, pinned between horse and barrier, got a compound fracture of the left leg; then charging again and again

with the steel points of the pics in his *morriño* until he had knocked over three more horses, being passed with the cape after each *quite* and yet seemingly not tired at all, still charging like an angry lioness, still carrying his great head high. The atmosphere of the ring was so tense that you could feel its tenseness. The spectators knew they had something exceptional here all right. You could not help knowing that, seeing the incredible, unearthly bravery of Caballero and that black bull.

Caballero had placed the first two pairs of *banderillas* himself, and was going in to place the third pair. Perhaps that was because he felt that with this bull he must do all the work himself, I thought. He placed the last pair as he had the others, standing still as the bull charged, deflecting him from his path with a slight sway of his lean body, then swaying back and driving the *banderillas* in with his arms out straight from his shoulders as the hot, steaming, half-ton bulk of the bull passed him a few inches away. It's madness, I thought. But even while I thought that I knew that it was not madness. It was valour.

The trumpet sounded for the last act. Caballero came along the barrier with sword and *muleta* and stopped below me, looking up, holding his hat in his right hand. His face was grey under the tan, under the streaks of dust and sweat. There were fine white lines running from his nose to the corners of his mouth, and his nostrils, too, looked pinched and white. He was breathing in short gasps. With a sudden great shock I knew that he was dying.

He was looking at me. His red-brown eyes were blazing, but the rest of his face was worn and still, grey under the tan. He's dying, I thought.

'To you, my friend, I dedicate this noble bull,' he said. He threw up his hat, and somehow or other I caught it.

He walked out towards the bull and let him go by in the *pase de la muerte*, the pass of the dead one, standing in profile, the sword pricked into the cloth of the *muleta*, the *muleta*, spread wide by the sword, held straight out in both hands at the height of his waist; raising it slowly as the bull reached it so that you saw Caballero standing still and the bull rushing past him, going up into the air after the *muleta*, being carried yards past the man by the momentum of his charge. When he turned and charged again Caballero passed him five times with *natural* passes, so profoundly beautiful and tragic and moving that it stabbed your heart to watch them; standing there with death going by in the horns in some inspired

ecstasy of valour, and truth, and honour, knowing himself to be immortal, and that knowledge communicating itself to you so that you knew, watching him, that you were immortal, too. I thought how strange it was that that should be, when I knew that he was dying.

Now he was standing profiled towards the bull, the *muleta* furled over its stick, the sword in his right hand pointing across his chest at the bull's shoulders. The bull's black, glossy hide was streaked with dust, and blood was trickling down his shoulders from the wounds which the pica and *banderillas* had made. He looked almost meek, standing there. I saw Caballero bend his left leg forward a little, swaying the *muleta* towards the bull. I heard a muttered exclamation from the man next to me. When I glanced at him I saw how pale he was. He looked dirty when he was pale, I noticed mechanically. 'He's going to kill *recibiendo*, to receive the bull! He's mad, with such an animal!' he said loudly. His voice was cracked with fear or excitement, or perhaps both.

As I looked back again at the ring the bull started. I saw Caballero standing quite still waiting to receive him, the two figures coming together with fearful swiftness, then a fraction of a second when they seemed to form one piece of living statuary, with the illusion that the sword was slipping into the bull's shoulders infinitely slowly, inch by inch, then the figures splitting up again as the bull passed, Caballero apparently leaning forward on the bull's flank, then cannoning off the bull's hip and falling to the ground, the bull stumbling on to his head and turning a sort of sideways somersault and slithering along in a great cloud of sand.

When I got to the infirmary I found a lot of people there. The *banderillero* who had been gored earlier in the afternoon was still on the operating-table, and they had laid Caballero down on a sofa in the ante-room next door. There was a smell of ether in the air. I managed to get hold of one of the doctors. He shook his head at me. 'Advanced degree of tuberculosis. . . . One lung eaten away . . . weakened heart . . . blow from flat of horn over the heart . . . great physical effort . . . internal hæmorrhage . . . ' he said. It sounded just a jumble of words to me.

'Can I see him?' I asked. 'I'm an old friend,' I added. He stood aside.

'I said I'd see you after the fight, Don Geraldo; do you remember?' Caballero said when I got to the side of the sofa. He



was smiling. They had given him a strychnine injection, for his heart, the doctor had told me, and his voice sounded quite strong.

I took him by the hand. There was no strength in his hand.

'That was the most brilliant *faena* I've ever seen,' I said. I knew that he would rather I said that than anything else.

'Bend down a minute, I want to say something,' Caballero said, smiling.

I bent down with my ear close to his mouth.

'Doña Concepcion was there. I'm glad I didn't tell her,' he whispered.

I straightened up, thinking that if I ever saw Angela again I'd tell her about Caballero, and his honour. I do not know why I thought that, just then.

'I'll tell Angela about your fight if I ever see her again,' I said.

But when I looked at Caballero I saw that he was not there any more. He had gone.

(Concluded)

## THE RUNNING BROOKS

*Irish Literary Portraits* : John Eglinton (Macmillan, 5s. n.).

*No Quarter Given* : Paul Horgan (Constable, 8s. 6d. n.).

*To Be a Farmer's Boy* : A. G. Street (Faber, 5s. n.).

*The Countryman's England* : Dorothy Hartley (Batsford, 7s. 6d. n.).

*Devon Holiday* : Henry Williamson (Cape, 7s. 6d. n.).

*Clematis : The Large and Small Flowered* : Ernest Markham (Country Life, 5s. n.).

*England's Pleasance* : S. P. B. Mais (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.).

THE great loss to English poetry in the recent death of 'Æ.' gives additional and tragic value to Mr. John Eglinton's study of him in *Irish Literary Portraits*, and reading it now in the light cast by sorrow one is moved to hope that the choice as official biographer may fall upon its author. For, though Mr. Eglinton declined George Moore's invitation to perform this service on his behalf on the score that 'Moore, as a subject, always escaped' him and also because of 'the careful consideration that would have been necessary of the long narrative works of his later years,' this altogether charming and illuminating collection of essays on the five most outstanding figures of the Irish Literary Movement seems to indicate that he would be eminently fitted for the task. In the meantime there is this finely balanced analysis of 'Æ.' as poet, as politician, and as man to sharpen regret—if that were possible—and to make us look with eagerness for anything further Mr. Eglinton may have to say on the subject. Of the remaining studies, the two of George Moore reveal the author's intimate association with and understanding of that brilliant, wayward personality, while those of the earlier and the later Joyce who, 'like a devil taking pleasure in forcing a virgin to speak obscenely . . . rejoiced darkly in causing the language of Milton and Wordsworth to utter all but unimaginable filth and treason,' make it difficult, in their lucidity and sense of proportion, to understand why Mr. Eglinton himself believes that he is the last person in the world who should be asked for an opinion on Joyce. The volume is completed with essays upon W. B. Yeats and Edward Dowden, in the first of which the author recounts from his own experience much that is of historical, critical, and appreciative interest in regard to the poet himself as well as to the movement of which he was the leader, and in the

second the man to whom 'books were the best things in life' appears in extracts from and comments upon his letters—the only means by which he was able to establish personal contacts.

Mr. Paul Horgan is a writer whom no one concerned with the significance of the work of contemporary novelists is likely to ignore. And this mainly because he is not only a fine craftsman, but also an artist whose sensitive imagination is creative as well as perceptive in the fullest sense of both words. *No Quarter Given* is a very long book—nearly seven hundred and fifty pages. Its settings range from New Mexico, Vienna, and Paris, to New York. But whether the scene is laid in the old yellow stone house in Santa Fé where Edmund Abbey, the famous composer, is fighting a losing battle against tuberculosis; in the mountain fishing preserve of the Upper Pesco Valley; in the scented, florid magnificence and pseudo-aesthetic commercialism of a New York cinema, or against all the varied geographical and emotional backgrounds of a *prima donna's* concert tour, Mr. Horgan's touch is equally sure, his *milieu* painting a thing of such delicate shading and rich colour as to leave the reader with an impression of actual experience. His power of characterisation is no less distinguished, and is perhaps most notably exemplified in the person of Edmund himself. For Mr. Horgan uses the difficult device of presenting his principal character in terms of his effect upon other people, effects which subtly reveal the inevitable self-absorption of genius, the inexorable preoccupation with music, the torment of long-drawn surrender to disease. It is true that considerable portions of the book are written in retrospect, in the first person, and that among these many of its most forceful, memorable, and beautiful passages occur. Yet in the end it is not through Edmund's own telling of parts of his story, but through his relations with his shallow, wealthy wife; with the actress who loves him; with his young stepson that we realise most clearly the greatness of his genius, the pitifulness of his physical collapse. To attempt to summarise this novel in the space of a few lines would be to do it an injustice. It is a book for steadfast reading and cumulative appreciation.

It is a pleasant experience to come across a group of books about the English countryside each of which, in addition to its own individual charm, contains a great deal of valuable information. To take first the most specifically instructive of those on our list, Mr. A. G. Street's *To Be a Farmer's Boy*. This book was written in answer to the thousand and more letters received by

the author from people anxious to learn how they or their sons could become farmers. It had its inception also in the remark of a friend: ' . . . you don't know what you do know . . . you're soaked in knowledge for which hundreds of town-folk are seeking. Why not stick some of it down on paper?' That Mr. Street acted on the suggestion is cause for gratitude scarcely less on the part of the general public than on that of the letter-writers. For no one who reads the book, be he prospective farmer or town-languishing country-lover, can fail to be almost bewitched by the immense amount of practical knowledge so clearly set forth in it, by its friendly humour and shrewd common sense.

Miss Dorothy Hartley also has accumulated a great deal of interesting information in the course of her life-long study of *The Countryman's England*, information beautifully illustrated by photographs whose number actually exceeds that of the pages of the text. Added to these are the author's own diagrammatic drawings which elucidate some of the more technical descriptions of the apparatus and technique of the countryman's life and crafts. The classification scheme of the book is unusual, the method being division according to the variety of the land. But whether we wander with its writer on mountain and moorland, on the undulating farmlands, in garden and orchard country, on flats and fens, on downs and in woods, or about the seacoast and estuaries, the joy of the discovery of some still surviving ancient usage glows on nearly every page.

Mr. Henry Williamson's *Devon Holiday* is, for the city-tied worker, the next best thing to the implications of its title. For who better than he can describe with 'the authentic sunlight of life' such scenes and personalities—animal as well as human—as those which make these rambling, humorous, poetic, and occasionally grim, pages so robustly satisfying, so gratefully refreshing? Yet delightful as is his light-hearted account of the doings of the party with whom he tramped through Devon, over Exmoor and Dartmoor, amusing as are his cameo-sketches of his holiday-making companions—an American professor; Mr. M. F. H. Zeale, a fellow-writer with a professed dislike for Mr. Williamson's novels; a lady amanuensis whose job it was to keep a record of incidents and conversations by the way for future publication, and the author's engagingly outspoken, eight-year-old son, Windles—the book, devoid though it admittedly is of serious purpose, is something much more than a reaction to the impulse to 'take literature and wring

its neck.' For, as is the way with everything Mr. Williamson writes, it is a treasure-house of country and animal lore whose foundations are laid warm and deep in the author's profound knowledge of and sympathy with Nature in all her moods and of the four-legged and winged creatures who people both her secret and familiar ways. Such knowledge is indeed power. Allied with grace of style, and—as in this book—an all-embracing sense of humour, it is wellnigh irresistible.

And while on the subject of books one of whose many claims on attention is their authors' specialised knowledge, let me mention a text-book on *Clematis*. Written by Mr. Ernest Markham, for many years the head gardener of the late Mr. William Robinson whose garden at Gravetye, East Grinstead, was recently presented to the nation, its practical value to those interested in the history and cultivation of this most magical of all climbing beautifiers of house and garden can hardly be overestimated.

*England's Pleasance*, by Mr. S. P. B. Mais—who certainly ought to be able to deny any suggestion of lack of knowledge of the subject about which he writes—is something of a disappointment, largely perhaps because of the rather arbitrary system of omissions on which it appears to have been planned. Take the chapter on Worcestershire and Herefordshire, in which that first enchanting county is described almost solely in terms of views seen from the Malvern Hills, as an example. There is no mention of Pershore where the plums come from, nor of Ombersley of the black-and-white timbered houses, nor, strangest of all, of Droitwich whose historical landmarks include the still operative salt-workings of the Roman occupation and England's most powerful broadcasting station. And the author's preoccupation with Malvern makes it obvious to one whose entire youth was spent within a few miles of it that he is as unaware of the subtle differences between that district of green heights and gracious valleys and the rest of the county as he admittedly was of the fact that Worcestershire is to a great extent a hop-growing country. From all of which it is not to be inferred that there is not plenty of interest and entertainment to be gathered from this discursive record of wanderings up and down the land by one whose journeyings always have the same objectives—beauty and adventure.

M. E. N.

## DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 143.

THE Editor of the CORNHILL offers two prizes of books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue, to the two solvers of the Literary Acrostic whose letters are opened first. Answers must be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, 50 Albemarle Street, W.1, and must contain the Coupon from page iv of the preliminary pages of this issue. They must reach the Editor by the 28th September.

I am that ———— ;  
 Out of me the years roll ;  
 Out of me God and man ;  
 I am equal and whole ;  
 God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily ; I am the  
 soul.

1. Half of thy heart we consecrate.  
 (The ——— is wove. The work is done.)
2. ——— rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
 A Youth, to Fortune and to Fame unknown,
3. The breezy call of ——— morn,  
 The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
4. To ———.  
 Drink to me only with thine eyes
5. When the stars threw down their spears,  
 And water'd ——— with their tears,

Answer to Acrostic 141, July number : 'In the blue evening's dewy star ; in crystal streams thy purity' (George Darley : 'To Helene'). 1. *Cross* (Browning : 'Meeting at Night'). 2. *Rest* (Hood : 'The Bridge of Sighs'). 3. *Yonder* (Tennyson : 'Come down, O Maid'). 4. *Shore* (Matthew Arnold : 'To Marguerite'). 5. *Teresa* (Richard Crashaw : 'A Hymn to St. Teresa'). 6. *Arm* (Walt Whitman : 'O Captain! My Captain'). 7. *Leave* (Keats : 'Ode on a Grecian Urn').

The first correct answers opened were sent by Miss R. J. Perry, Beeches Green, Aughton, and Miss Holmes, Heatherlea, Rothbury, who are invited to choose books to the value of £1 from John Murray's catalogue.

Solvers need *not* send the source of the quotations used in these acrostics.



There

